

18TH ANNIVERSARY

NOAM CHOMSKY ON DEMOCRACY'S SLOW DEATH

November 28 - December 11, 1994



In THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

BRAVE NEWT WORLD



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*Joel Bleifuss and Marc Cooper
on why the Democrats deserved to lose*
*David Moberg
on the meaning of the Gingrich mandate*

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EDITORIAL

THIS MIGHT BE A YEAR TO REMEMBER

Some day we may look back on 1994 as the year the American people began to revolt against a bankrupt political system and the corrupt politicians who administer it. It's hard for us on the left to see it that way after this month's Republican sweep, but that's the way millions of Americans, both among those who voted and the many more who didn't, do see it. And if the left is able to understand and respond appropriately to them, anything could happen. We, of course, are always optimistic. Still, we believe that this was a defeat Democratic leaders earned, in large part because of their failure to challenge the governing principles they have shared with the Republicans since the beginning of the Cold War era.

For the left, the message seems clear. You can't beat the Republicans unless you challenge them consistently on a principled basis. And that's exactly the opposite of what Bill Clinton and the late but unlamented Speaker of the House Tom Foley have done. Their failure to do so, of course, came as no surprise. Clinton and his closest allies have been affiliated with the Democratic Leadership Council, a group of Democrats indistinguishable, once in office, from moderate Republicans. Clinton campaigned as a champion of working people and minorities, which is what Democrats have to do among traditional Democratic constituencies. But his electoral party and his governing party are two very different things. In office Clinton has taken some progressive stances, most notably on social issues—and he finally restored Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti. But, like all presidents, he clings to the bipartisan agenda of our corporate establishment.

This has left the labor movement, African-Americans, feminists, Latinos and environmentalists out in the cold, or at best warming their feet in the vestibules of power. Yet these are forces that constitute the Democrats' largest and most consistent electoral base—and the ones that stayed away from the polls this election day. They are also the social core of left forces in our society. But as organized groups they play minor roles because they have been reduced to separate special interest lobbies in a system where corporate money has become ever more important in winning elections.

The left's only capital is people. That is why throughout

our history, every excluded minority, lacking the power of money, has fought for enfranchisement. Together, they comprise a potential majority of American society. And as groups naturally opposed to corporate power and special influence, the social movements that comprise the left have a common adversary. But increasingly, they have no common identity. Instead, they revel in their separate identities and beg or demand crumbs from the table of corporate power.

The American people know that something about our society is profoundly wrong, but they don't have a clue about what it is. Thus, this election, even more than most, was fought over symptoms of the disease—crime, corruption, personal character—while the increasing unaccountability of corporate power and the deification of the bottom line remained unspoken.

Nor is there much that any single candidate in any one race could do to counter this trend. If the left is ever to regain a voice in our national debates, it must begin a long-term process of bringing together its core constituencies on the basis of shared interests and principles. And it must identify and oppose the principles of their common enemy.

This is not an impossible task, as Rep. Bernie Sanders demonstrated by winning re-election in Vermont this year, despite the Republican sweep. (See story on page six.) As the lone self-identified socialist in the House, one might expect that he would have been easy to knock off—and the Republicans did make him a major target. But Sanders, as mayor of Burlington, had carefully built a solid base of support and has always been upfront about what he believes.

Vermont, however, is a special case—a small liberal state with only one real city—which made it possible for one per-

***Americans know something is
profoundly wrong with our
society, but they have no idea
what it is. It's time for
the left to start explaining.***

son to parlay a popular mayoralty into an effective statewide organization. To replicate Sanders' accomplishments in other states, a group of organized social movements with many resources would be needed. The possibilities exist. People are deeply concerned about the nature of our society, and the left could offer better explanations for our plight than both parties' appeals to everyone's worst nature. Isn't it time for the left to come out of the closet and start telling it like it is? ◀

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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InTHESETIMES

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NOAM CHOMSKY

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LETTERS

Out there?

Scott MacLarty bases his November 14 "Viewpoint" essay upon the supposition that a homosexual is also innately left-leaning on all political issues. For example, MacLarty assumes that because I am gay I am naturally a proponent of a particular type of government-run health care system. As a gay man, I am naturally pro-union and anti-NAFTA. Additionally, I am pro-choice. I would vote for Jesse Jackson. I am an advocate of immigrants' rights (whatever that means). And I prefer civil disobedience and confrontation to reasoned argument.

It is upon his tenet that all homosexuals are of one a priori, shared, liberal mind that MacLarty argues for coalition-building between homosexu-

al organizations and various other liberal organizations with widely ranging political objectives.

However, not only is this a false assumption, it is offensive. In fact, it is no less offensive than the religious right's assumption that because I am gay I am predisposed to wearing leather chaps, women's clothing and nipple-rings; that I am a child molester; that I am emotionally incapable of sustaining a monogamous relationship based on love and respect; and that I am destined to move from one dark and nameless sexual tryst to another, all within the course of an evening.

My first point is this: The only thing one can rightfully determine to be true from the knowledge that someone is a homosexual is that that person is sexually attracted to people of the same

sex. Any further assumptions are as offensively stereotypical as the belief that people of African descent are more likely to commit crimes.

MacLarty makes sweeping statements such as, "The March on Washington proved a success in terms of numbers. ... But many of our issues were noticeably underplayed..." Our issues? The variety of political issues to which MacLarty refers in his essay are obviously issues for which he possesses much passion. But they are not *my* issues, nor has he any reason to legitimately profess them to be the issues with which most homosexuals are concerned.

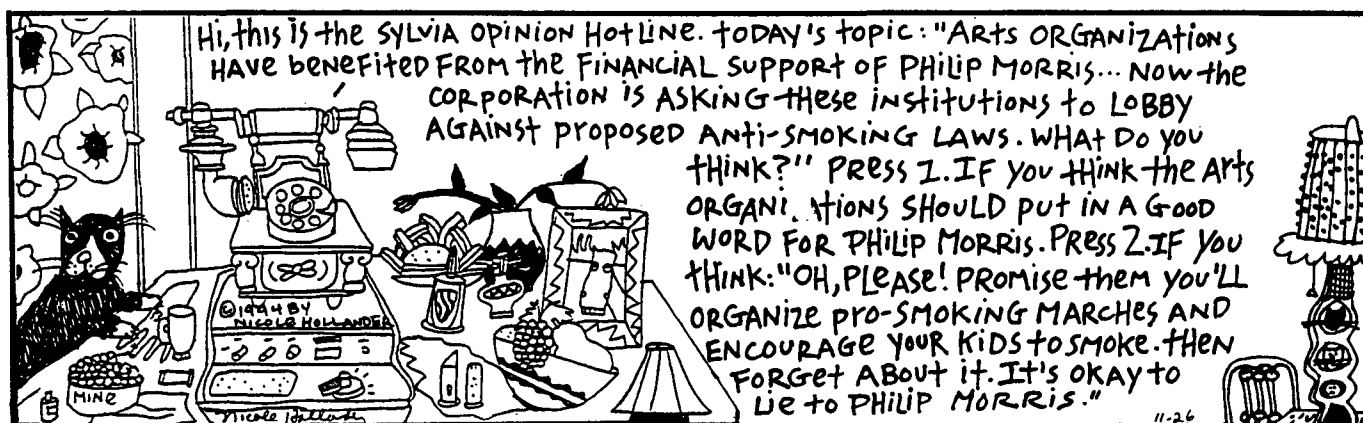
My second point is this: The only political issue that can be safely assumed to be of inherent interest to someone who is a homosexual is that their homosexuality not be used by others to deny them the same rights that other Americans enjoy (an issue that's oddly absent from MacLarty's essay).

He concludes with the following: "Unless we can coalesce on something outside our own special interests, we in the gay community will remain an island unto ourselves. Isolation and impotence are not attractive qualities for a movement founded on sexual liberation."

So much is off the mark here. First, coalescence erroneously presupposes a collective homosexual mind. Second, the notion of "special interests" are as relevant as the religious right's rhetoric of "special rights."

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



Third, what exactly is the "gay community" If the term refers to gay ghettos such as West Hollywood, the Castro district and "The Village," I grant those are neighborhood communities that are heavily populated by homosexuals. But this would leave out the majority of homosexuals in America who do not live in these places. I am afraid, however, that the "gay community" to which MacLarty refers is really the minority of homosexuals who choose to define themselves solely by their sexual orientation. And if this indeed is the gay community, is it any wonder that it will "remain an island"? After all, "It's a gay thing," and how can anyone who is not gay be expected "to get it"? So much for building coalitions.

But the debate needn't be limiting and decisive. We are, after all, family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers, in addition to being homosexual. And what better or more fertile ground for building effective political coalitions than communicating one-on-one with someone who may harbor prejudice toward homosexuals. If such a person knows you to be a good friend, a reliable worker, a wonderful neighbor or a loving brother or sister, you have a powerful opportunity to enlighten them to the fact that homosexuals are people much like themselves—capable of loving relationships and civic duty and social achievements. It is in this way, and I believe the only way, that homosexuals can debunk the ignorant and mean-spirited view that we are society's odious other and gain the political support necessary to win, as author Bruce Bawer's book title suggests, "A Place at the Table."

Finally, while the movement for equal rights for homosexuals was ignited within the walls of a little gay bar in New York City, I think it's misguided to equate this beginning to "a movement founded on sexual liberation."

The point isn't that homosexuals have a right to demand the freedom to indulge in a variety of sexual acts, but rather that we have an equal right to

not be denied our constitutional freedoms because of our sexual orientation.

That is the issue.

Rob Osler
Seattle

Digital donkey

David Futrelle brays like a digital donkey in his critique of America Online (*ITT*, October 31). He also ignores its key feature. For a couple of hundred thousand people AOL is mainly about using the Internet to send e-mail, the instantaneous inexpensive way of contacting anybody, anytime, anywhere, as well as exchanging information.

Because AOL does not provide access to the entire universe of information available on the Internet, Futrelle implies this makes it a kind of electronic kindergarten.

However, AOL does deliver the daily *New York Times*, almost nightly access to a broad range of achievers with whom you can have a keyboard conversation, and almost every magazine of consequence. And that's just a blade of grass in an enormous meadow.

As for Futrelle's chat-group chiding, a pal of mine, a skilled jazz guitarist, logged on so he could share a few thoughts with a jazz great who AOL was featuring. A lady jazz buff was also tuned in, and liked what my pal was saying. They retired to a private chat group, became friends and discovered that they lived near each other in New Jersey. Today they are engaged.

AOL may be for beginners, but at least we're off the dime and learning.

Al Levin
@aol.com

Information convoy

Nice overview of the AOL/Internet milieu (*ITT*, October 31). Just a couple of fine points I'd like to clarify for the sake of discussion.

When discussing "old hands on the Internet," it would have helped if

David Futrelle had defined who these old hands are. I'm afraid he gives the impression that a bunch of graying, data acolytes lurks on the Info-bahn, ready to thrash any hint of ignorance. The truth is, the people with the most time to flame on the Internet are also some of the newest of newbies—the college kids who get a terminal to play with. As an old hand on the data byways (I've been a subscriber to CompuServe for 12 years, and I've also, at one time or another, subscribed to AOL, Delphi, DINS and numerous BBSs), I can tell you that there are few true "old hands" lurking in the Internet Newsgroups waiting to flame newbies.

Futrelle writes that "AOL is ... most hated by Internet regulars." Actually, AOL is most hated by the regular Internet flammers. The regulars long ago learned how to ignore and pass over the trash, regardless of the node source.

In the end, Futrelle's column pointed out a genuine truism about all online services: the "human interaction" is largely banal, juvenile and boring. For your next column, how about pointing out the incredible similarities between the use of the Internet and the explosion in CB radios in the '70s? C.W. McCall, where are you now? What we need is a really good country Internet song. "Breaker, breaker, ALT.FAN.LETTER-MAN, we got us a newbie!"

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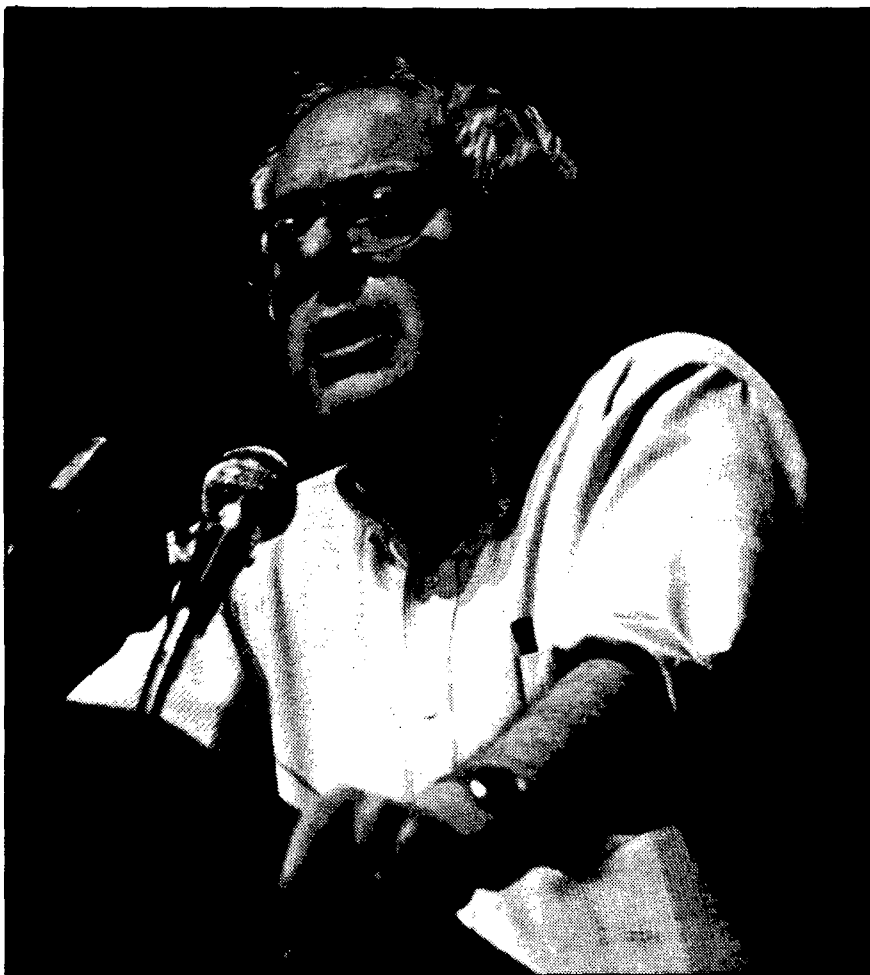
Puff piece

At last, someone willing to break rank with Quentin Tarantino's chic admirers! Thanks for Pat Dowell's review (*ITT*, November 14).

Tarantino is a profoundly apolitical filmmaker dabbling in, what Dowell rightly calls, "white-boy fascination." Who else would think it appropriate, even artsy, to present crime as a career chosen by closet deep-thinkers instead of a decision made within the real world of economic and social constraints?

Barbara Osborn
Los Angeles

InSHORT



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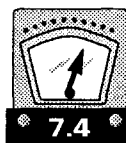
SOCIALIST SURVIVOR

New Deal liberalism may have reached the end of its 60-year run, but pragmatic, charismatic and democratic socialism retains its appeal. That, at least, is how Bernie Sanders interprets his reelection as Vermont's sole U.S. House member. Sanders says he was able to withstand the Republican onslaught "because I'm not a liberal—because we deal in class issues. Many elderly and rural people who traditionally voted Republican now vote for me," he notes. "When it's an issue



Rush Limbaugh declared that the 1994 elections were reason to take out his "Gloat-O-Meter." Funny thing: we note a certain congruence between his calibration of conservative conquest and our measurement of malady.

Increase White House security!



Thanks to the new GOP majority in the House, Newt Gingrich

becomes second in the line of presidential succession, just behind Al Gore.

Busy signals



On the day after the election, Gingrich refused a call from the presi-

dent of the United States. The congressman was busy with a more pressing matter—a radio talk show.

Helms in a handbasket



Jesse Helms—the man who opposed U.S. sanctions against the

apartheid government in South Africa, the man who supported Augusto Pinochet

in Chile and Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines—is ready to take over as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Can't buy me love, but...



Candidates who outspent their opponents won 83 percent of the 35 Senate races, and 85 percent of the 435 House races, according to the Associated Press.

We got you, babe



In an eerie echo of the film *Bob Roberts*, a folk singer turned right-wing demagogue has been elected to the U.S. Congress. He is the Honorable Sonny Bono of California.



APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Models Inc.-redible!
2. Infomercial Irritating
3. Plausibly deniable
4. L.A.P.D. blue
5. Bob Dole-iclous
6. Raoul Cédras-tic
7. Ollie North nasty
8. Holiday in Rwanda
9. Zhirnovskyesque
10. Where have you gone, Joe Goebbels?

of Social Security, the minimum wage, family farms, veterans' rights, those people know I'm on their side."

An analysis of Vermont voter behavior generally confirms Sanders' claims. As in the mid-'80s, when he won the backing of many Reagan Democrats as mayor of Burlington, the state's largest city, Sanders again ran strongly in culturally conservative urban neighborhoods. Sanders lost upscale suburban communities to Republican challenger John Carroll, a corporate-type conservative, but he rolled up solid majorities in counties with large numbers of dairy farms. In fact, Sanders owes his narrow victory (50-47 percent) mainly to his strength among rural voters, who comprise 68 percent of Vermont's population.

Sanders started with a solid base in Vermont's largest city, where he defeated Carroll by an 8-5 margin. But the race was much tighter in the surrounding suburbs. Had Vermont's usual voting patterns prevailed, Sanders' narrow lead in the Burlington area would have disappeared as returns trickled in from the state's rural precincts. James Jeffords, Vermont's Republican U.S. senator, predicted at 11:00 on election night that this is exactly what would happen. In a televised interview after his own re-election had been secured, Jeffords said that based on all he knew about Vermont politics, John Carroll would become the state's next congressman.

Jeffords' scenario did play out in the case of Doug Racine, a liberal Democrat who challenged incumbent GOP Lt. Gov. Barbara Snelling. Racine came out of the Burlington area with an even larger lead than Sanders, but the Republican squeezed through to victory (50-47 percent) thanks to a conservative trend in rural areas. Sanders, however, flourished where the liberal faded. Somehow, the University of Chicago-educated Jew with an ineradicable Brooklyn accent has earned the allegiance of Yankee farmers and mobile-home dwellers. "Bernie's always been perceived as someone not captured by the special interests," says Democratic state Rep. Sandy Baird, a progressive who seldom sings Sanders' praises. "He's seen as strongly for working-class people."

Blue-collar male voters did not abandon Sanders to the extent that they defected from Democratic ranks in the rest of the country, according to Baird. In Vermont, she says, working-class men could express their anger and alienation without turning to the Republican Party. "They had another option. They could vote for a progressive independent."

The issue of gun control confused class politics to some degree, Sanders admits. National Rifle Association (NRA) attack ads, aimed at Sanders because of his vote to ban certain assault weapons, may have contributed to his loss of a few rural counties that he carried in both 1990 and 1992.

At the same time, Sanders speculates, NRA invective might have gained him votes from middle-class gun-control advocates who do not normally support an avowed socialist.

Assessing the national situation, Sanders surmises: "If people on the left are going to survive, they will have to get back in touch with the working class of America. We have to help them understand that there are things in life more important than an AK-47."

—Kevin J. Kelley

ERWIN KNOLL, A TRUE PROGRESSIVE

Erwin Knoll, editor of The Progressive magazine, died in his sleep of a heart attack on November 2. He was 63. Knoll was born in Vienna, Austria, and came to the United States as a child to escape the Nazis. Before coming to The Progressive he worked on the staff of the Washington Post and then, from 1963-68, as a White House correspondent for the Newhouse National News Service. In 1968, he joined The Progressive as the magazine's Washington editor. Five years later Knoll moved to Madison, Wis., to become editor. In recent years he was also a member of the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour panel of regional editors, where he valiantly articulated the principles of the left.

Knoll was a person of great integrity. As a colleague and friend, he was always ready to lend a hand when In These Times was in trouble. And for the last 10 years he was an enthusiastic host and barbecue chef at our annual Progressive-In These Times softball games. We are greatly saddened by his untimely death.

In the following article, ITT contributing editor John Judis, a member of The Progressive's editorial advisory board, remembers Knoll.

I first met Erwin Knoll in 1979. He called me up after reading a column I had written for *In These Times* chiding liberal interest groups for opposing a new Constitutional Convention. The ideas appealed to Erwin's contrarian desire to needle his own allies on the left. I drove up to Madison a few weeks later to meet him and Sam Day, who was then managing editor of *The Progressive*. Beneath a thick cloud of tobacco smoke, we negotiated a deal by which I would write every month for *The Progressive* about political campaigns. Our arrangement ended three years later when I moved to Washington and when Erwin lost what little enthusiasm he had for the two-party system.

He was a good editor to work for. He was frank about what he did and didn't like, and as a former reporter, he made a point of paying authors on time, even when the magazine was on the edge of insolvency. I saw and talked to him less regularly after those first years, and when we did talk we argued about politics. While he saw me as a captive of Washington insiderdom, I viewed him as having become too friendly to the Sandinista left. But just when I thought he had become entirely predictable, he would surprise me—by taking on controversial Chicago Rep. Gus Savage (D-IL) or opening his pages to the anti-abortion left. The contrarian streak remained.

Erwin was a fine writer. His column at the beginning of each issue was the best-written piece in the magazine. He was also a wonderful talker, as viewers of the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* discovered. He spoke deliberately and emphatically, as if even his casual observations had been distilled from decades of reflection. He had a sense of gravity that grew with his years, as his hairline receded and the weight of his appearance shifted downward from his sad eyes to his goateed chin. But his seriousness was always accompanied by a fine sense of irony. At an imagined incongruity, his curmudgeonly scowl would expire into a broad smile.

In the mid-'70s, he revived *The Progressive*, putting it on the cusp of the environmental and anti-nuclear movements. As the Cold War receded, and as these movements disintegrated, the magazine, like others on the left, floundered, unsure of its own purpose and identity. But I thought that

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

And the winner is...

Television was an even bigger winner than the GOP in the 1994 elections. This year's \$350 million in political ad revenues far outstripped 1990's \$200 million, with gutter-level negative ads propelling the spending to record highs.

Morphed out

The TV distributor for *The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* once told me that the action show was educational because the characters were role models—teenagers doing good for the world. But a growing number of people aren't buying such justifications. Canadian TV stations have voluntarily pulled the show following parental complaints that kids got more aggressive after watching it. Meanwhile, the New Zealand government has banned the show, also citing aggressive, mimicking behavior. A regional TV channel in Scandinavia also temporarily pulled the plug.

All this international concern may not affect programming in the United States, where the Fox show—which consists mostly of dubbed footage from a pre-existing Japanese show—has become a smash hit, with record-breaking licensing profits.

(If you're not watching kids' TV and aren't quite sure what the Power Rangers are, remember back to Halloween. The most popular costume was a Power Ranger. They sold out so quickly that moms took to sewing them; two-thirds of the 750,000 patterns that Butterick sold this year were for Power Rangers.)

Fox isn't claiming the Power Rangers are educational, but the network does celebrate the show's positive values. Indeed, at a recent congressional hearing, Fox executive Margaret Loesch proudly submitted a letter from suburban D.C. parents thanking the show for saving their child's life. It seems he ran out in front of a car and used roll techniques he'd seen on the show to break his fall, ending up with mere scratches.

If children's and public-interest advocates succeed in pressuring the Federal Communications Commission to refine its rules, the Power Rangers might find their time slot squeezed. The advocates are demanding, optimistically, an hour a day of educational and informational kids' shows.

TV's Ideology

The Tyndall Report, that soberly fascinating journal that monitors TV network news coverage (135 Rivington St., NY 10002, 212-674-8913), has mapped the worldview of TV news producers by tracking coverage of social issues over three months. That worldview is, on the evidence, flat-footedly in the middle between competing pressure groups. The hottest topic was, of course, crime, followed by health care and the economy. The publication found that networks "explained" crime with references to guns and drugs—not the best news for the National Rifle Association. The powerful tobacco lobby won subtle victories, though. Rarely was tobacco linked to health issues or the debate on health care reform.

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Erwin's voice became more distinct. During Operation Desert Storm, he took a strongly pacifist position—a difficult and courageous choice for a Jewish immigrant from Nazism. He was following his own path, one that he had embarked upon well before the emergence of the New Left movements that the magazine championed.

Erwin was, of course, a man of the left; but he was, above all, a maverick, a dissenter and an individualist who defied easy categorization. Like Albert Jay Nock—a man usually identified with the right—he was a kind of village anarchist, old-fashioned rather than progressive in his tastes, contemptuous of much of what passed for advancement in the modern world. We often quarreled about elections. I saw them as a degraded yet redeemable form of democracy, but he regarded them in their current American form simply as an outgrowth of profound civic corruption. My opinions seemed to me to be more useful, but his probably reflected—and I say this grudgingly—a deeper appreciation of the thwarted potential of the American spirit.

I will sorely miss him.

—John B. Judis

Tomorrow's News Tonight

By Steve Brodner

Inquisition Update

Immigrants Gone, Californians Enjoy Prop. 187



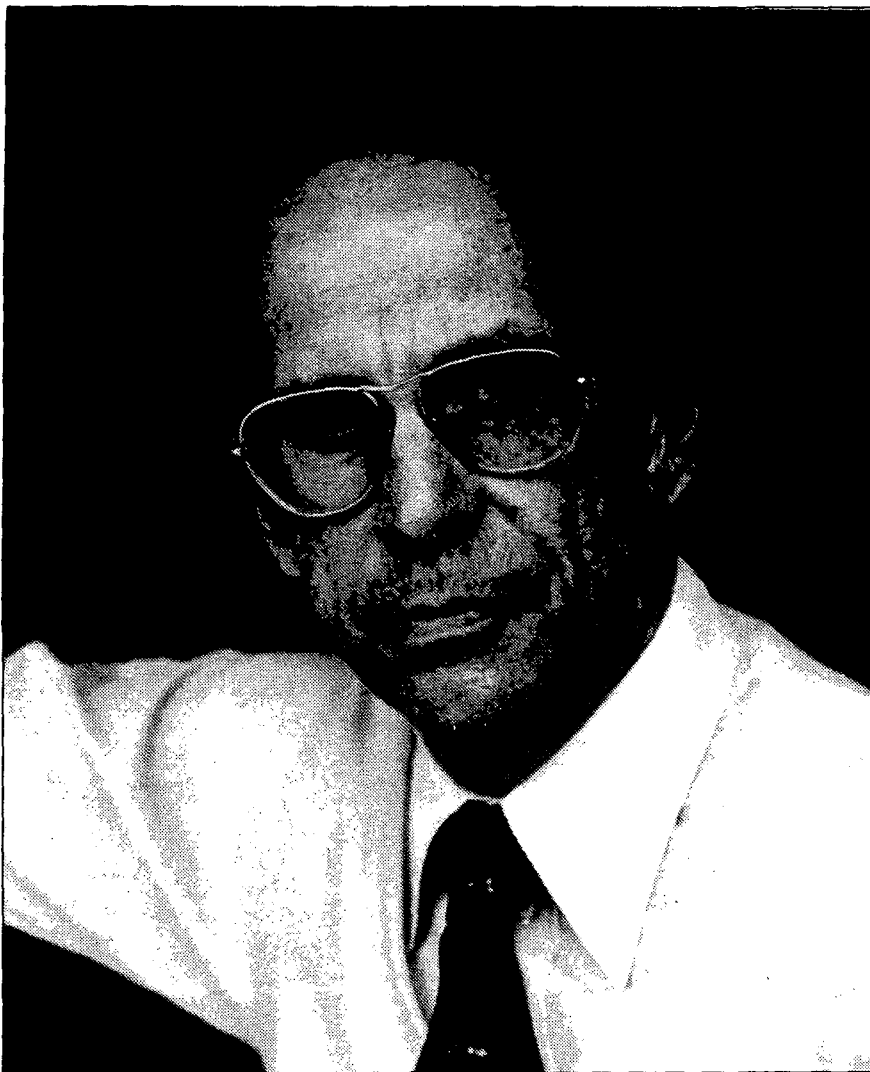
Gov. Pete Wilson slips disk doing his own gardening.



Nancy Reagan ruins Galanos ensemble cleaning her own bathroom.



Forced into child-care duties Schwarzenegger catches strep, pink-eye and double ear infection that meets in the middle of his head.



LABOR'S ADVOCATE

*Tony Mazzocchi,
worker for the workers*

(OCAW). "You have to confront the job issue."

If anyone can rise to that challenge, it is Mazzocchi. A short, swarthy man who looks younger than his 67 years, Mazzocchi has well-honed skills in building bridges between the labor and environmental movements. He envisions the OCAW as not merely a bargaining agent for wages and conditions but as a "cause, a commitment, a crusade."

Sitting in his Washington, D.C., office, Mazzocchi notes, for example, that "35 percent of all profit in the state of California is from toxic-producing industries." But he also knows that the jobs in these industries pay well. Consequently, much of his time is spent resolving the conflicts that arise between environmental groups and the interests of the 100,000 workers he represents.

To that end, he is helping the New York City-based Public Health Institute

"People confronted with the option of a clean environment and starving to death are going to go for a dirty environment and jobs," says Tony Mazzocchi of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers

ETC.

By Jim McNeill

Right vs. rights

Progressives grieving over the Republicans' recent electoral triumph can take some comfort in the defeat of anti-gay rights initiatives that appeared on the ballot in Oregon and Idaho.

Oregon, of course, has been through this once before. In 1992, the Oregon Citizens Alliance placed an anti-gay rights referendum on the ballot. Then, as now, the measure failed. But religious right forces in Idaho were inspired by the alliance's example and formed a copycat group called the Idaho Citizens Alliance (ICA). This year, the ICA placed their own anti-gay rights initiative, known as Proposition 1, on the Idaho ballot.

The ICA claimed that Proposition 1 would simply restrict the establishment of "special rights" for homosexuals. But the proposition was so restrictive that the state's entire congressional delegation—both Republicans and Democrats—opposed the measure.

The No on 1 Coalition, which organized opposition to the initiative, ran a cautious campaign geared to the state's traditionally conservative voters. The coalition appealed to Idahoans' lingering pioneer spirit, calling Proposition 1 an attempt to "force unnecessary government intrusion on our lives." Coalition leaders—who forged strong ties with mainstream churches and both political parties—warned voters that passing the measure would force the state to spend millions defending it against legal challenges. Proposition opponents also raised the specter of Colorado, which became the target of tourist

boycotts after voters there approved an anti-gay rights initiative in 1992.

Despite the broad coalition opposing Proposition 1, however, 49 percent of state voters cast ballots in favor of the measure. Although coalition press secretary Ryan Hill says "we're just happy we won," he admits that Idaho's religious right "built a sizable political base" by campaigning for Proposition 1. The ICA compiled an impressive mailing list, says Hill, and now that the election returns are in, "they have a county-by-county record of where they're strongest. Of course, so do we."

A fiscal meltdown

Back in the '50s, the visionaries who designed America's atomic power plants promised to produce electricity that would be too cheap to meter. Somehow, that promise never quite panned out. Today, nuclear power is far more expensive than conventional energy sources.

Unfortunately, the cost of atomic energy looks like it will only be rising in the future. The dismantling of Yankee Rowe—the nation's oldest commercial reactor when it was closed in 1992—is proving far more expensive than originally estimated. (See "Old nukes aren't good nukes," *ITT*, Aug. 21, 1991.) When utility officials shut down the Massachusetts nuclear facility in 1992, they said dismantling it would cost \$247 million. But, according to a recent Associated Press report, revised estimates now place the figure at \$370 million, nearly 10 times the \$39 million it cost to build the plant in 1960.

put out a newsletter, *Jobs and the Environment*. And he has spoken before a conference organized by Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste, movingly recalling chemical industry workers he has known who were killed by their jobs.

Mazzocchi grew up in Brooklyn, the son of an Italian-American immigrant who was active in the garment workers union. After a stint in the Army during World War II, he began working for the Helena Rubenstein cosmetics company and in 1950 joined the United Gas, Coke and Clerical Workers of America, a forerunner of the OCAW. Three years later he was elected president of his New Jersey local, where he negotiated the first dental insurance program ever in private industry. In 1957, he joined the OCAW's International Executive Board, where he has been since, serving the union in a variety of capacities.

His concern for worker safety and health issues developed while working on the 1956 Adlai Stevenson presidential campaign. "We picked up the cessation of nuclear weapons tests as a key issue," says Mazzocchi. "Three prominent scientists who had just returned from the Bikini bomb tests spoke at a meeting I attended. I got very interested in the subject of radiation and began to think about the effects on workers."

In 1965, Mazzocchi was appointed the OCAW's legislative director. When he arrived in Washington, he explains, "You could put all the people concerned about worker safety in the corner of one small room. People at the worksite knew there were problems, but everybody thought that their problems were unique."

Mazzocchi, working with a coalition that included Ralph Nader, scientists and environmental groups, helped pass the Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970. This was not to be the last time that he found allies outside the labor movement. In 1973, Mazzocchi organized a labor, consumer and environmental coalition when the OCAW struck Shell Oil in the country's first strike over health and safety issues.

Mazzocchi holds strong opinions not only about improving the safety of American jobs but about the quality of the jobs themselves. "Most of people's waking hours are spent working," he says. "But there are very few redeeming features of the average person's worklife. Most people work doing mundane tasks in dead-end jobs."

His solution: five-year, paid sabbaticals. "We have to redefine what work is all about. People should receive income for taking care of their kids and going to school," he says. Based on existing production capacity, Mazzocchi argues, "everything that needs to be done to satisfy people's material needs can be done in one day." He adds that "we'll never have enough jobs for everyone."

Worker retraining, says Mazzocchi, is "nonsense." "Retraining for what?" he asks, pointing out that current programs direct workers into service jobs that usually pay at or below the poverty line.

Mazzocchi trusts neither the Democrats nor the Republicans to promote or achieve this agenda, however. In 1990, with backing from OCAW president Bob Wages, Mazzocchi helped form Labor Party Advocates. The group, based in Highland Park, N.J., was established to explore the possibility of forming an independent labor party, a cause Mazzocchi has championed since 1979, when he made it a plank in his unsuccessful bid for union president.

He points to surveys of blue-collar, white-collar and service-sector unions that show dissatisfaction with the two major parties. "We need a party that speaks to our concerns. Our position is, 'The bosses have two parties—we want one.'"

—Eric Weltman

THE FIRST STONE

NEW DEMOCRATIC DELUSIONS

By Joel Bleifuss

In the wake of the November 8 election, a wide-eyed Cokie Roberts took to the ABC airwaves and advised the president, "Move to the right—you can get out the Democratic base if you need to."

Roberts is wrong. Like most the the Beltway mediocracy, she fails to understand that the November 8 election was a referendum on—and repudiation of—the Democrats' nationwide electoral strategy to run as "New Democrats."

In a morning-after funk, I was mulling over the possibilities of term limits for pundits when my reverie was cut short by a call from Vic Fingerhut, a Democratic pollster who worked for Hubert Humphrey in 1968. He disagrees with Roberts' analysis. "This election proved that the Democrats can't run conservative campaigns and win elections," he says.

Fingerhut says that 26 years of polling data and election returns indicate that the Democratic loss was due to a party-wide failure to build electoral campaigns around economic populism—a failure that he maintains the Democrats have repeated time and again. (See *In These Times*, May 24, 1989.)

Fingerhut made his case in the January 1993 issue of *Campaign and Elections*. He explained that in the 1968 election Humphrey began by emphasizing his support for civil rights and his determination to negotiate an end to the Vietnam War. It didn't sell and with three weeks to go until the election, Humphrey was badly trailing Nixon. At that point, the Humphrey campaign took Fingerhut's advice and adopted a traditional economic message that talked about wealth and how it corrupts power. Consequently, Humphrey rose 15 points in the polls, narrowly losing to Nixon.

In 1972, Humphrey, having learned his lesson, advised George McGovern to put himself forward as the protector of "the little guys against the big guys." Instead, the McGovern campaign focused on the Vietnam War and

Nixon administration corruption.

In 1976, Jimmy Carter rode to victory on a campaign that stressed economic populism. "Too many have had to suffer at the hands of a political and economic elite," thundered Carter in his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention. "When unemployment prevails, [the elite] never stand in line looking for a job. ... And when the bureaucracy is bloated and confused, the powerful always manage to discover and occupy niches of special influence and privilege. An unfair tax structure serves their needs. And tight secrecy always seems to prevent reform."

In 1988, Michael Dukakis blundered along until the last 10 days of the campaign when he discarded his

talk of "competence" and replaced it with the populist theme of "which side are you on?" By the time of the election, Dukakis had risen 10 percent in the polls.

And again in 1992, as the campaign reached its final months, candidate Clinton largely abandoned the trendy rhetoric of his "new covenant" and returned to a traditional Democratic focus—attacking a tax structure that benefits the rich and blasting the Republicans' trickle-down economics.

Which brings us to the Democratic campaigns of 1994.

"In this election," according to Fingerhut, "we let the Republicans set the agenda, and instead of redefining it we spent tens of millions of dollars emphasizing the crime issue, and in so doing we heightened the saliency of that issue. We have to get back to our Democratic issues. What we kept turning up in polls is that the biggest single strength that the Democrats have had for 60 years is that they represent ordinary working people. That is our great positive. But we found in our polling that most people who voted Democratic said they voted Democrat out of habit. When you start getting those kinds of answers that shows a party on the way out." Fingerhut is particularly chagrined about the Democrats' failure to exploit the clause in the Republicans' Contract With America that promised a cut in the capital gains tax. "We could have made it into an attack on the rich," he says.

Such talk is anathema to the Democratic Leadership Council's (DLC) political philosophy. "The DLC is very influential in the Washington media," says Fingerhut. "But [DLC head] Al From really represents nobody. If the DLC had a rally on the Mall, Al could get 2,000 lawyers and lobbyists from K Street."

Fingerhut has no patience with misdiagnoses from talking head spin doctors. "Last night you had Cokie Roberts on one channel and Al From on another saying that the Democrats must get more conservative. Can you find some-

one more conservative than [Treasury Secretary] Lloyd Bentsen? Should we bring in someone from the Hoover administration to set our economic policy?" he asks. "Their statements are so inane that if you actually try to put some substance into them you see how stupid they are."

But views like Roberts' resonate in Washington because the Beltway's media elite are social liberals and economic conservatives, in other words New Democrats. "These people in Washington are upper-middle-class, globalists and social liberals, which means that in terms of public opinion they are on the wrong side of the issues—most people are socially conservative and economically populist. Historically, Democrats have won votes on their populism and expended some of their strength on their social liberalism."

Had any network thought to interview a representative of organized labor, they might have called Bob Wages, the 44-year-old president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW). He would have said that Clinton's wholehearted endorsement of NAFTA alienated a lot of traditional Democratic voters. "It is very, very difficult to tell people that you are for jobs, when you engage policies that erode jobs and that erode the manufacturing base," Wages says. "People are not going to be moved by a politics that they feel totally frustrated with."

He is as critical of the AFL-CIO's lack of direction as he is of the Democrats' new direction. "The AFL-CIO leadership is sitting on their asses, thinking that it is more important to have tea and crumpets at the White House than to build a movement that resonates with the people they represent," he says. "There are a lot of people who talk all that liberal crap, but when push comes to shove they are so interested in currying favor that they think they are getting something for it, when what they are getting is screwed."

The OCAW has called for a more equitable tax structure, a worker-friendly trade policy, significant campaign finance reform and single-payer health care. And the union has invested a significant amount of its resources into educating and organizing the OCAW's 100,000 members around those major issues.

While the OCAW backs individual Democratic candidates, Wages does not have faith in the New Democratic leadership. "On every major issue we don't see a dramatic difference between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party," he says. "The bottom line is that the trade union movement ought to be organizing its own political initia-

tives independent from either party. It requires building a grass-roots political movement that is accountable to working men and women."

Under the leadership of Wages and Tony Mazzocchi, the OCAW founded Labor Party Advocates, a New Jersey-based organization that is exploring the possibility of establishing a labor party that would represent the interests of working men and women. (See story on page 10.)

"If you read the 1992 Democratic platform it doesn't mention the words 'trade union' once," says Wages. "It talked about the global economy and free trade without any corresponding commitment to jobs and the building of an industrial base. This Democratic Party has become Richard Nixon's Republican Party. Go back and compare the records. It's scary. Unless the trade union movement becomes the progressive force that it can be, we aren't going to be around in a few years as any sort of meaningful voice. And the more we play into the current brand of politics-as-usual, the more we are marginalized."

Clearly, for the Democratic Party to thrive it must break with the strategies of the tried-and-failed New Democrats. If the party is not able to reform itself, progressive Democrats will have to find something to take its place. ◀

Next issue: Back to campaign finance reform, as promised.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



POLITICS

Brave Newt world

W

ere Americans really voting against government when they cast their ballots for Republicans in the November election? Not surprisingly, Newt Gingrich says the answer is yes. But the real message of the 1994 election is not as clear as he and his fellow Republicans would have us believe.

The GOP victory did not spring from a monolithic majority but from three different strands of voters. And while a close look at these three voting blocs is full of bad news for Democrats in the short term, it offers some grounds for hope in the future.

First, there was a strong turnout of hard-core Republicans—including an energized religious right—who were motivated by a passionate hatred of the Clintons. Most of these voters are hostile to government, but they are split

over key issues.

In addition, traditional Democratic voters failed to turn out at the polls in big numbers. Despite Clinton's accomplishments, Republican gridlock and presidential vacillation resulted in a malaise even among the party more-or-less faithful. Most voters had at best only vague knowledge of the Republican's Reaganesque "Contract With America," the specific platforms of which did not receive a mandate, according to exit polls. But for their part, Democrats offered no plan at all, other than to "stay the course"—an approach voters roundly repudiated.

Most critically, compared to the 1992 elections, Republicans won over a large bloc of independents and former Perot backers, especially white men of moderate income, aged roughly 30 to 45. This was particularly true in the South, where Democrats must forge an entirely new strategy to address the region's continuing long-term realignment into solidly Republican territory.

Much of this key independent group that swung against Clinton and the Democrats consists of what Times-Mirror pollster Andrew Kohut calls "the New Economy independents," a "post-industrial working class" that ranks jobs and stagnant or declining wages as the critical problems. They have gained little in the current economic recovery. Though Clinton and the Democrats gave many of these voters tax breaks, the squeeze on their own incomes makes them critical of any higher taxes. These voters are indeed skeptical about how well government works, and the Times-Mirror polling indicates they are "not particularly sympathetic to poor people and minority groups." But they are not yet adamantly anti-government in principle.

Nonetheless, the election clearly reflected a national mood: voters were generally unenthused about government as it currently operates, distrustful of Democrats, disappointed with Clinton and increasingly mean-spirited. Asked if government should take care of people who can't take care of themselves, nearly three-fourths said "yes" in the late '80s but only 57 percent agreed shortly before this year's election. There's no way to read this hopefully: voters may not have rubber-stamped Gingrich's contract but they surely did share his foul temper.

This year's populism vilified government and the poor (especially immigrants and minorities)—though these forces were hardly to blame for corporate downsizing, sliding wages, disappearing jobs and tighter money. Despite the campaign against NAFTA, there is no populist outrage against irresponsible corporations, the money policies dictated by big bankers and bond dealers, the growing inequality of incomes or the ravages of a global free market. (See story on page 25.)

Gingrich is even less prepared than Clinton to ease Americans' economic woes.

By David Moberg

Yet it is precisely such economic issues that underlie the sour mood and political volatility of the electorate—not only the “post-industrial working class” but also the vast majority of the population, including growing segments of the professional and managerial elite. In an analysis of the 1992 vote for the Economic Policy Institute, sociologist Ruy A. Teixeira concluded that Bush defectors who voted for Perot were people with high school or some college educations and modest incomes who had suffered greater wage losses than those voters with similar education and incomes who had supported Clinton. This year many of those “losers” in today’s economy flipped back to the Republican side.

Social issues did make a difference with voters. Democrats suffered from a backlash against the gun-control and gay-rights movements, for instance. And crime-weary voters also trusted Republicans to kill more criminals more quickly. But the key issue for this election—and probably more to come—is long-term prosperity and security for a beleaguered working class (which, despite representing the bottom four-fifths of the population in income, often calls itself middle class).

Clinton delivered little to this group. Early on, he was forced to abandon most of his plans for rebuilding the nation’s infrastructure and stimulating its economy. Then he based his economic strategy on having the Federal Reserve Board—an institution dominated by Republican bankers and catering to wealthy bondholders and traders—hold down interest rates. Meanwhile, he reduced the deficit, shrank government employment and held down the federal government’s share of national income. None of these measures—which all minimized government’s role—delivered much prosperity or many voters.

Still, Gingrich’s program for shrinking government (except the military and police) will do even less to address these core problems. Britain’s *Economist* magazine observed recently that American economic inequality is high relative both to our own past and to other countries. “A combination of lightly regulated labor markets and global economic forces,” from new technology to low-wage competition, have generated more inequality around the world, the magazine noted. Strong unions and government regulations have minimized these effects in Europe; among advanced countries, only in the United States have the poor become even poorer in absolute terms in recent decades.

Despite the recovery, poverty in the United States rose last year, and real household income declined for the bottom four-fifths of the population (while rising for the richest fifth). These economic trends have also fostered family instability, which contributes further to inequality, as single mothers lose ground and couples with two professional or managerial incomes leap further ahead.

Draconian Republican plans to dismantle an already inadequate welfare system will not reduce poverty and



inequality or stabilize families. They will create not only more misery but also more crime and social disorder. They will also unleash more desperate competition for jobs, further depressing wages and working conditions.

All this may cheer Newt Gingrich. But even his ilk should be concerned about recent studies that show that the more unequal societies are, the slower their economies grow. There are many possible explanations for such a link: inequality increases the burden of social and health problems, increases conflict and the cost of social control, and reduces worker and civic motivation and cooperation.

Gingrichism will not reverse the economic decline suffered by most Americans. But that may not be immediately obvious, as stark economic issues are clouded by debates on prayer in school and crime. If they are to succeed, Democrats must fight at every turn to define the debate on their terms. Gingrich’s attempts to reform the way Congress does

New and improving

Drowned out by news of the Democrats' electoral collapse was a small sign of hope for U.S. progressives. The left-leaning New Party, though only two years old, registered a surprising number of electoral gains across the country.

New Party candidates won 22 out of the 33 races that they entered, capturing local offices in Arkansas, Maryland, Wisconsin and Washington, D.C. In Maryland, New Party member Paul Pinsky, running as a Democrat, won a state senate seat—the highest office yet secured by the party. And in Wisconsin, the New Progressive Party (NPP), an affiliate of the New Party, achieved statewide ballot status—the first time the party has done so.

Unlike other third-party efforts, which often begin—and end—with fatally flawed presidential campaigns, the New Party is building its base from the bottom up. Some of the New Party's most promising grass-roots work has been done in Wisconsin, where organizers in both Milwaukee and Madison have built substantial party organizations.

In May, the party's Milwaukee and Madison chapters combined with the state's Labor and Farm Party to form the NPP. Given the growth of the NPP in Wisconsin, party organizers are anything but disheartened by the Democrats' November 8 debacle. "I think it's a grand opportunity for us," says Tammy Johnson, Wisconsin coordinator for the New Party and the NPP. "As I've been talking to people, I've heard a lot of questions about what the New Progressive Party is going to do. For now, we're still going to stick to local elections."

Johnson says the NPP's Milwaukee chapter is planning to run a slate of school board candidates and a county supervisor in the spring elections. The Madison-area New Party affiliate already has 14 members who have been elected to the city council, the school board and other local offices.

Both the Madison and Milwaukee chapters have pursued the New Party's national strategy of connecting with the left wing of the Democratic Party. Johnnie Morris-Tatum, a Democrat who sits on the steering committee of Milwaukee's New Party chapter, was returned to the state assembly in this year's election. She was first elected in 1992, and faced no opposition this time around.

To gain statewide ballot status, the NPP departed from the usual New Party practice of running only in races where it stands a solid chance of winning. Since Wisconsin grants ballot status to any party fielding a candidate for state office who receives 1 percent of the total votes cast in the governor's race, the NPP ran Kathleen Chung for state treasurer. Chung received nearly 3 percent of the ballots cast in the gubernatorial election—a showing that makes the New Progressive Party the third strongest in Wisconsin, displacing the Libertarian Party.

The party's ballot status will last for four years. Daniel Grossberg, executive secretary of the NPP, expects that the party will use its ballot line to run candidates for state legislature from the Madison area.

Although Madison voters this year helped elect a Republican to Congress and both houses of the state legislature are now under Republican control, Grossberg is not discouraged. "It wasn't liberal ideas that were rejected on November 8," says Grossberg. "That was a contest of who could carry out Republican ideas, and the Republicans won. The election was not a defeat for progressive ideas. We need to get out the word that there are progressive solutions for the problems people feel."

—Steve Watrous

business will win much popular support, but Democrats should enter a bidding war for political reform that stresses restricting the role of big money politics and lobbying. Welfare reform is inevitable, but Democrats must make the tough fight against a punitive approach in favor of more effective, more humane strategies that include training, child care and varied social supports—including guaranteed jobs. Voters will cheer a middle-class tax cut, but Clinton and the Democrats should fight the far greater tax cuts Republicans intend for the rich. They should also argue for shifting burdens from the middle class to the rich.

Democrats can't simply count on voters waking up one day to realize their folly in following Newt. There will be a backlash only if there is a political movement that not only defends against Republican attacks on the poor, workers and government, but also advances a strategy to reduce inequality and bolster security.

Clinton cannot let Gingrich and the grinchers of the Republican hard right define the national agenda. He should revive the early themes of his 1992 campaign. Then he outlined a "new social compact" that called for greater social responsibility across the board, from welfare recipients to big corporations. In Clinton's original vision, Americans would join together in a compassionate and tolerant community that expects everyone to play a constructive role for the greater good. Reviving such a value-laden message is crucial to counter the vindictiveness and intolerance that the right presents as its "social values."

Tactically, Clinton must appear to be willing to cooperate with Republicans in Congress. But he should respond to Gingrich on the presumptive speaker's terms: no compromise on principle. This assumes Clinton has principles, a view many would say is unjustifiably hopeful.

Contrary to much prevailing punditry, the election was not a plea for bipartisanship. Further bipartisanship with such an aggressively ideological new Congress would amount to capitulation. Moreover, bipartisanship is not what the country needs. It needs a sharp and open debate. Clinton and his party must decide what they believe and whose side they're on.

For example, when Republicans move to dismantle or neutralize the Occupational

Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Clinton should not compromise but should push for worker health and safety committees in every workplace. He should travel across the country both to meet with victims of unsafe workplaces and to demonstrate how OSHA has saved workers' lives. He probably won't win in the short term, but he will show how the government Republicans want to abolish works for "normal" Americans.

The Republican agenda for 1995 and beyond will intensify the class and cultural war of the Reagan era, fought in the name of "normal" Americans but ultimately waged against them. In this battle, there are two tasks for Democrats. First, they must foster a new populism that makes the currently clashing ranks of the poor and the resentful "middle class" realize they have common foes in the wealthy and corporate elites as well as in the institutions, including those of government, that work against the bottom four-fifths. That will require not only a battle to define the issues but also new attention to rebuilding grass-roots political institutions. Second, Democrats must project their vision of a new social compact that is inclusive and tolerant but emphasizes shared responsibilities, aided and reinforced by government.

Since the New Deal, the Democrats' strength has always been that most working people believed the party was on their side. But the party has lost that trust. The Democrats—or some alternative party if they refuse the task—must fight, starting now, to regain it. ▲

Armies of the right

God works in mysterious ways, according to a post-election autopsy conducted by People for the American Way. Sixty percent of the nearly 600 candidates in local, state and national races who were aligned with or supported by the Christian right were elected to office.

To make it on the group's list of Christian-backed candidates, the office-seekers had to meet one of three criteria. They had to be a member, a leader or have publicly supported a Christian right organization. They had to have received campaign funding from the Christian right. Or, they must have publicly endorsed Christian right issues, including prayer in public schools, opposition to abortion, the teaching of creationism, anti-gay legislation, etc.

In gubernatorial races, the Christian right contested 14 governorships and captured nine, for a 64 percent success rate. In the Senate, Christian right candidates ran for 22 seats and won 16, for a 73 percent success rate. In the House, Christian right candidates ran in 244 congressional races and won 190, or 78 percent. To put it another way, candidates aligned with the Christian right now occupy 44 percent of all House seats.

—Joel Bleifuss

ON THE ROAD WITH VERSO



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POLITICS

GOP wannabes

As the results of the GOP landslide came over the tube on election night, the champagne popped and the Ritz crackers were gleefully passed out at the homeowners clubs that dot the northern and western edges of this city. The celebrations didn't equal the dramatic revelry of the Salvadoran oligarchy that in 1980 marked Ronald Reagan's election by firing salvos of automatic ammunition into the air. But for the mostly white, propertied middle class, whose high turnout disproportionately influences statewide and national elections, the result was just as sweet.

The election results in California prove the "New Democrat" approach to be a bust.

By Marc Cooper
LOS ANGELES

And why not? For it is this thin crust of suburban swing voters—Reagan Democrats and Clinton Republicans, the so-called "forgotten middle class"—who have become the obsession of both parties, and therefore the objects of

endless bipartisan flattery, seduction and shameless pandering. To be white, employed and paying a mortgage in suburban Los Angeles at election time is to be easily convinced that the world revolves around you and your property tax bill (greatly reduced already by the infamous Proposition 13 of the late '70s).

And in the increasingly apartheid atmosphere of Southern California, the agenda of this frightened caste could be reduced to a simple formula: higher walls, more cops, less taxes, thank you very much. That's precisely what the Republicans offered up this year. That's why they won. That's why the homeowners clubs celebrated.

Now that the smoke is clearing the question that looms nationally is how will the Democrats recover so much lost ground gobbled up by the political right? The media-spun Conventional Wisdom has already come up with a pat answer: when in Newt's World, be like Newt. Bill Clinton, the thinking goes, must now abandon his liberal posture and move rightward to the center—or beyond.

But what happened in California should stand as a dire warning to the proponents of that theory. Perhaps nowhere more than in California, certainly in no place of more strategic importance to the White House, was the moderate New Democrat politics already implemented. And nowhere have the results been more disastrous—not only for the Democratic Party itself (about which this author couldn't care less) but for the ordinary Californians who will now have to suffer the consequences of the party's failures.

What was once one of the most liberal, progressive and innovative state Democratic parties in the nation has—in the last handful of years—gone through an ideological downsizing that left it totally unprepared to unseat even such a perennially unpopular figure as Gov. Pete Wilson and impotent to challenge a noxious apartheid measure known as Proposition 187. By all measure, the race should have marked a triumphant return of the Brown family into the statehouse, with Kathleen Brown following in the footsteps of her father, Pat, and brother, Jerry. Nonetheless, it turned into a humiliating rout. "I'm at a train wreck with no survivors," said Bob Mulholland, the state Democratic Party's campaign adviser and one of the leading engineers of the defeat.

And what an engineering marvel to behold. One year ago Pete Wilson looked like a pathetic clone of George Bush. His state was mired in a seemingly endless recession; unemployment was nudging the 10 percent mark. Within his own party he had long ago angered the hard-right core with his moderate views on the environment and abortion. The state education system, which had been brought up to Cadillac level by Pat Brown in the early '60s, was now an oil-leaking junker, ranked 47th in the nation. One fiscal cri-



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Opposition to Proposition 187 gave rise to a new political movement.

After another had led to fee hikes for college students, reductions in teacher salaries, the shuttering of libraries, the curtailing of public health services.

All Kathleen Brown had to do was announce her candidacy and in a state where a third of the Democrats would support anyone with her last name, she jumped a staggering 25 points ahead of Wilson in the polls.

But that the Democrats would eventually blow that margin and, indeed, wind up losing the governorship by an awesome 15 points was already foretold. Because in one respect the Republicans are right: the Democratic Party *has* become little more than a collection of lawyers and lobbyists in tasseled loafers. Just as our restructured national economy invests little value in communities of blacks, Latinos and

poor white people, all seen as more or less superfluous, the Democratic Party is now merely following suit by abandoning its old base.

Los Angeles went up in flames just two and a half years ago. But despite President Clinton's record 15 treks to the state since his election, no sight of any federal spending is to be seen in the riot area. Instead, each Clinton visit has seemed to have the same focus and message: reassuring what he calls the middle class that he will reform welfare, put 100,000 cops on the street and balance the budget.

And what better harbinger of the defeat than the public statements of the man the media portrays as the virtual icon of California liberalism, Assembly Speaker Willie Brown? The most powerful African-American politician west of the Mississippi, Brown came before reporters earlier this year and said that proposed "three strikes and you're out" mandatory-sentencing legislation was ineffective, immoral

and would bankrupt the state. That didn't stop him from voting for it anyway.

Any lingering notion of the Democratic Party as a populist counterweight to corporate Republicanism has been scrapped. Indeed, the party has come to resemble the old Democratic Party of South Africa, the small centrist grouping that claimed to oppose racism, apartheid and injustice but whose doors were open only to white voters. Of course, most white South Africans greatly preferred the right-wing National Party because, after all, if you are going to live under apartheid, you might as well go with the dedicated, professional racists. And so it has been in California and across the nation.

Clinton's New Democrat strategy essentially ceded the political agenda to the right, the proprietary turf of the GOP. And everyone knows the home team has the advantage. Offered only a choice between the Democrats' half-baked turkeyburgers and the Republicans' bloody prime rib, there was no contest.

In California, Democrats from Kathleen Brown to Dianne Feinstein, right down the ticket, did the GOP a huge favor by aggressively running away from their traditional base and prostrating themselves in front of the "forgotten" middle class. They came off as little more than pathetic wannabe Republicans. Not a single statewide Democratic candidate, for instance, endorsed Proposition 186, the single-payer health care measure that was buried by a 70 percent no vote.

Nor did any Democratic candidates find the courage to object to Proposition 184, the "three strikes" initiative, which shields the state's new mandatory sentencing law from any modification without a nearly impossible-to-reach two-thirds legislative majority. Proposition 184 will, within a handful of years, finish off the job started with Proposition 13—effectively choking off state-funded social services. It's no wonder that the prison guard lobby was the biggest supporter of 184, given that an estimated \$16-25 billion will now have to be found in our already bankrupt coffers to build enough prisons to warehouse those snared for a third offense. Kathleen Brown even had the gumption to promise to simultaneously rebuild the educational system, balance the budget *and* zealously implement "three strikes."

Squandering the liberal legacy of her father and brother—not to mention a huge lead and a \$24 million war chest—Brown diluted her message into a New Democrat nebulosity. She seemed to ignore her natural base of blue-collar unions, blacks and Latinos. Instead, she campaigned like a Perotista, stressing balanced budgets and, of course, a tougher-than-thou position on crime. Yes, she opposed the death penalty on "personal and religious" grounds but she also swore she would not flinch from enforcing it, leaving conservatives and liberals equally perplexed as to just where they might find her moral center.

In the case of Dianne Feinstein, however, you'd have to ask yourself just what if any liberal base she had going into the election. Feinstein eked out her razor-thin victory by

essentially becoming a conservative fusion candidate palatable to both Democratic and Republican suburbanites. She won her first election to the Senate in 1992 only because her opponent, Bruce Herschensohn, represented the most extreme wing of the Republican Party. No accident that her first series of 1992 ads featured Feinstein standing in front of the gas chamber and promising to use it. Once in the Senate she crossed party lines to help kill the Democratic health care proposal.

And like in her '92 race against Herschensohn, when confronted with a hard-right ideologue, Feinstein eschewed offering a decent liberal alternative and instead occupied the meaner center-right ground left vacant by her extremist opponent. Any Republican candidate slightly less laughable

than the vacuous Michael Huffington would have wiped Feinstein off the political map.

Predictably, as the clock ran out in the last few weeks of the campaign both Brown and Feinstein—like Michael Dukakis in 1988—cranked up the populist rhetoric and raced back to their putative liberal core constituencies, waving the specter of the Republican bogeymen. But in Brown's case (and almost Feinstein's as well), it was too little, too late.

Democrats have themselves to blame for Wilson's re-election.

By the time Brown reached out, many of her potential liberal and African-American allies had long ago given up and lost interest in her and the Democratic campaign. What better indicator of the Democratic failure in the state's black community this year than the disturbing fact that 50 percent of African-American voters supported Proposition 187, the so-called "save our state" anti-undocumented immigrant measure? In spite of a well-funded campaign against the measure, it passed overall by a decisive margin. Gov. Wilson has staked his re-election effort on the two hot button issues of crime and immigration and they worked like magic—thanks to the New Democratic strategy.

Just as the Democrats had given away the store on the "three strikes" measure, Brown and Feinstein also long ago conceded the immigration issue to the right. They eventually both came out against Proposition 187 when—at least in Brown's case—there was nothing left to lose. Nonetheless, Brown repeatedly called for deployment of the National Guard at the border, and Feinstein's campaign spots used the same "they keep on coming" video of Mexicans jumping the southern border as Pete Wilson did in his campaign. In fact, Feinstein was holding border press conferences and vowing a get-tough-on-immigration policy long before anyone heard of Proposition 187.

California's Democratic elected officials in general played a truly despicable role in the 187 controversy. When the

Continued on page 21

HAPPY



anniversary

From the bottom up

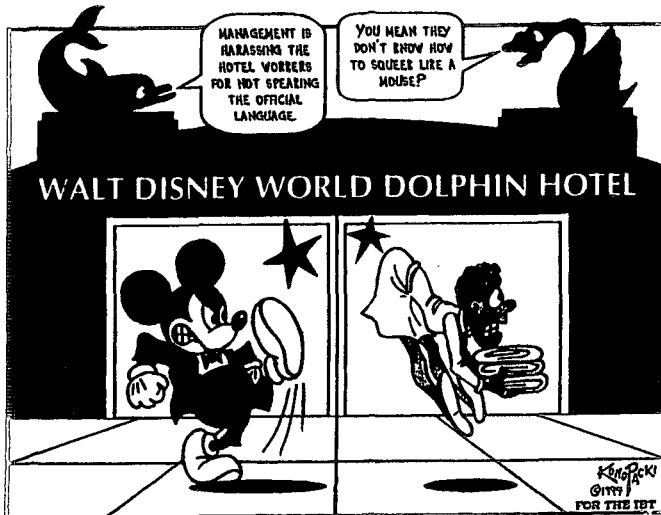
This last year has marked yet another stage in the development of *In These Times*. A year ago, our future looked iffy, in fact, bleak. This year, after having successfully refinanced the magazine, with the major support coming from our readers, we have again begun to increase our circulation and to improve our coverage. Although we are not yet the largest, we are increasingly recognized as the best political magazine in America. And we are now confident that we can continue to grow in the years ahead.

The collapse of the Democratic Party earlier this month underlines the unique importance of a left press that can challenge the ruling principles of the political establishment and can provide a public presence for left alternatives. There are precious few publications attempting to do this, and none that are doing it more consistently than *In These Times*.

We have survived 18 of the most retrograde years in the history of our nation. Eternally optimistic, we believe that the need for a coherent left opposition has grown more pressing every year. As part of that process, we look forward to continued growth and wider influence in the years ahead.

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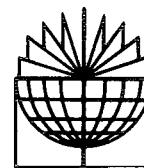
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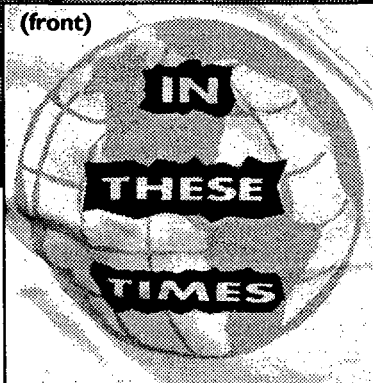


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Continued from page 20

time came this past summer to hammer out an approach to defeat the measure, a coalition of powerful Democratic PACs (led by elected officials) decided that the moral aspect of the issue should be conceded. Proposition 187 was to be opposed publicly not because it moved the state toward apartheid, but because it was simply not the best way to stop illegal immigration. In the end, the consulting firm chosen to run the No On 187 campaign, Woodward and McDowell, was a Republican outfit that had made its political bones by successfully defeating just about every progressive ballot initiative of the last two decades.

But how could have one expected California Democrats to do any differently? The fight over 187 took place just as the Clinton administration itself was formulating its own national version of "immigration reform," featuring former liberal and former Rep. Barbara Jordan's proposal to register all legal residents and citizens on an employer database.

Nonetheless, in the yawning political space left open by enfeebled Democrats, a new extraparliamentary social movement was inadvertently ushered into existence, much the same way that anti-Vietnam protests moved into the streets 30 years ago as Democrats prosecuted the war. Some 100,000 liberal and Latino opponents of Proposition 187 took their cause onto the sidewalks last month, organizing the largest political demonstration and march in recent Los Angeles history. When they arrived at City Hall there were no Democratic candidates on hand to encourage them. Instead, the first speech from the rally platform came from Ron Unz, the young millionaire Republican businessman who had challenged Pete Wilson in the June primary from the *right* but who at least had the backbone to say what Brown and Feinstein didn't: that Proposition 187 was morally repugnant.

Grass-roots organizing against 187 grew quickly, and Brown and Co.—who had initially opposed the street mobilizations—now changed course and quickly tried to take advantage of the popular movement. But all this took place *after* the deadline for voter registration had passed, and the tens of thousands of new voters that the Democrats could have brought into the electoral process were already shut out.

Nonetheless, this other, alternative political campaign continued ahead. Given no expression in the electoral campaign, and inspired by a mammoth kick-off street demonstration, a new generation of high school students staged scores of walkouts, marches and protests in Los Angeles, San Francisco and outlying communities. While the Republicans and the media excoriated the kids for carrying Mexican flags, the Democrats cowered in fear of being associated with the young militants. The police readily skirmished with the angered students, but the protests continued right up through election day.

Democratic failure planted the seeds of the new movement. Now it is the Republicans and Gov. Wilson who will have to deal with the stirrings of a new Latino civil rights movement. Nonetheless, Wilson, at least for the moment,

seems happy to ride the wave of xenophobia he helped unleash. No sooner than the day after the vote, with Proposition 187 already tied up in the courts, he signed a unilateral decree cutting off state-funded prenatal care for undocumented women. No matter that the affected children will be born as U.S. citizens—they are still aliens as long as they are in the womb. Wilson is also promising more welfare cutbacks, more spending cuts and more auxiliary measures to enhance the effects of Proposition 187.

Meanwhile in Washington, the incoming speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, his eye as much on vote-rich California as is Bill Clinton's, has already told the *Los Angeles Times* that the new GOP-dominated Congress has a host of California-friendly measures on the table: increased military spending for our state's battered defense contractors, tougher immigration measures for its porous southern border, and a "real" anti-crime bill to keep the lid on the suspect and unruly sectors of the population.

Except for the military spending, this list clangs on the ears as the same tin-pot wares that Bill Clinton and his local allies have been peddling around this state for the last two years. If the Democrats want to avoid a repeat of this year's election debacle in 1996, they'd better come up with a real alternative instead of a faint echo. ◀

Marc Cooper is a Los Angeles-based staff writer for the *Village Voice*. His collection of reportage, *Roll Over Che Guevara: Travels of a Radical Reporter*, has just been published by Verso.

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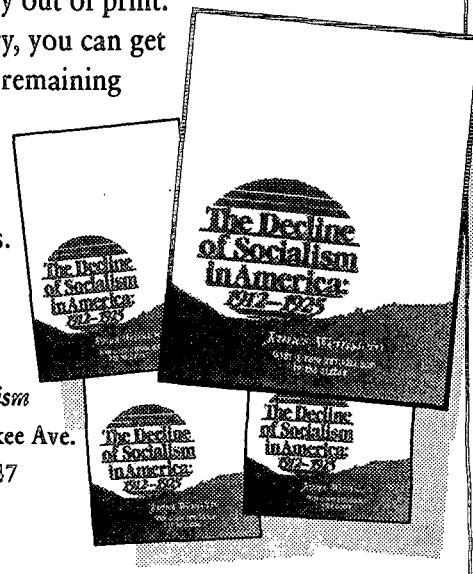
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RACE RELATIONS

Dangerous curve

**American
xenophobia
makes a
comeback—in
polling booths
and in
bookstores.**

By Salim Muwakkil

The Republican electoral revolution of November 1994 arrived on the heels of a controversy about race and intelligence provoked by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's already infamous book, *The Bell Curve*. The two contemporary events may seem unconnected, but as cultural portents they form a dangerous tandem that could easily escalate the level of racist discourse in the United States.

While pundits and political psychologists have used terms like anger, frustration and exasperation to explain the electorate's boisterous mood, the word "xenophobia" does a better job of gauging the national sentiment. Issues from immigration to crime to welfare reform all have racial dimensions that tie very much into the mood of the American moment. And, of course, this is not just an

American moment—xenophobia is all the rage in Europe as well.

The Bell Curve further poisons this already poisonous atmosphere, suggesting that social success or failure is largely a function of IQ, and that IQ is a function of genetics. Since blacks have a lower aggregate IQ than whites, the authors contend, it is no mystery why they suffer disproportionate miseries, generation after generation.

Of course, this argument is nothing new; it formed a cultural context that justified chattel slavery and the commodification of Africans. Murray, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and his deceased co-author both are amateurs in the fields of race and genetics (Murray has a degree in political science and Herrnstein was trained in psychology). But a lack of professional expertise has seldom deterred some of the Western world's finest minds—David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jeffer-

son among them—from expressing similarly Afrophobic ideas in their respective eras.

What is particularly significant about *The Bell Curve* is its timing. Rarely has a book come out at a more propitious political moment. (Murray's *Losing Ground*, which argued for a cold turkey withdrawal of welfare benefits during the middle of the Reagan administration, was similarly well timed.) While Murray loudly denies a political motive for writing *The Bell Curve*, the controversial volume makes the same point he has been pushing for years: welfare-state policies aggravate rather than ameliorate social problems. The new book's conclusions inevitably attack the notion that social policies can promote economic justice. Programs designed to alter the natural dominance of the "cognitive elite" are useless, the book argues, because the genes of the subordinate castes invariably doom them to failure.

In recent years polls increasingly have revealed that many white Americans feel that programs like affirmative action and racial set-asides have gone too far and are unfairly affecting them. Programs once heralded as part of a compassionate social safety net are now demonized as part of a socialistic welfare state. *The Bell Curve* sanctifies those tendencies and provides a respectable cover of science. The economic status quo, it argues, is simply a ratification of genetic justice.

"[Murray and Herrnstein's] argument is racism, pure and simple," says Dr. Steve Jones, a geneticist at University College in London and author of the award-winning book *Language of the Genes*. "They've hijacked false genetics to push an ideological agenda." *The Bell Curve* is an 845-page bun-

dle of data, compiling a number of previously published studies. But many geneticists who have reviewed the book condemn the authors' selective use of contested data.

"It is already becoming clear that the air of dispassionate scientific curiosity that [Murray and Herrnstein] are at such pains to maintain is at odds with the eccentricity of some of their sources," writes Alan Ryan in *The New York Review of Books*. Ryan denounces Murray and Herrnstein's treatment of J. Philippe Rushton's "bizarre" book, *Race, Evolution and Behavior*, as the work of a serious scholar.

Rushton is a Canadian psychologist who has argued that Asians have larger brains for their body size, smaller penises, lower sex drives and a stronger work ethic than Caucasians. He argues that Caucasians have a similar relationship to blacks. Murray and Herrnstein's use of sources like Rushton and of white supremacist writers like Richard Lynn illuminates their ideological links to the Pioneer Fund, a shadowy group that has been trying for many years to resurrect the eugenic ideas that were discredited by the Nazi horror.

Though neither Murray nor Herrnstein have received any money from the group, they rely on the findings of several fund recipients. The Pioneer Fund is a small right-wing organization founded in 1937 to fund research on racial differences and the importance of heredity. According to the fund, it is nature, not nurture, that guides an individual's fate. This belief is called hereditarianism and it posits, essentially, that African-Americans are at the bottom of most socioeconomic measures because they are genetically deficient. Pioneer subsidizes those researchers whose work reinforces these general principles.

Arthur Jensen, the notorious Berkeley psychologist who triggered controversy with a 1969 essay in *Harvard Educational Review* arguing that blacks were intellectually inferior to whites for genetic reasons, won a Pioneer Fund grant. So did William Shockley, the late Nobel Prize-winning physicist and co-inventor of the transistor, who urged the establishment of a fund to pay "intellectually inferior" people to allow themselves to be sterilized.

Certainly, discussion about the influence of biology on human nature has become more respectable since the '70s, when the left uniformly condemned such speculation as providing fuel for racist demagogues. Recent advances in genetic research have shown genes to have powerful determinative effects. But such revelations have provided cover for the unscientific and formerly discredited theories of eugenicists. According to Troy Duster, author of *Backdoor to Eugenics* and director of the Institute for the Study of



With immigrants, criminals, low-IQers gone, Charles Murray is the last person qualified to live in America.

©STEVE BRODNER

Social Change at the University of California at Berkeley, we should be worried about using revolutionary breakthroughs in molecular biology to support ideas of genetic determinism.

"We can screen an individual's genes at the molecular level to see who's at risk for devastating medical disorders like Tay-Sachs, sickle-cell anemia and cystic fibrosis," says Duster, who is black. "And these breakthroughs have created an unjustified halo effect for geneticists trying to explain behavior."

Duster appreciates the quandary posed by that medical progress. On the one hand, there is much value in the insights afforded by genetic mapping, and simply to protest those methods for their racist potential is unreasonable. But on the other hand, as Duster points out, there are responsible "critics who have been portrayed as naysayers and paranoids, or know-nothing Luddites who would put their heads in the sand or try to stop the machinery of progress."

Ideas of genetic determinism historically have provided "scientific" justification for stigmatizing various groups besides blacks, including Asians and Eastern and Southern European immigrants. Duster fears that if the general public accepts the notion that there are genetic propensities for violence or other social pathology and fails to understand the need for safeguards against abuse, then genes could easily be used as a rationalization for the political oppression—and worse—of African-Americans and other minorities.

Many of those other minorities are also on the Pioneer Fund's hit list. The group helps to subsidize the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), which backs immigration restriction and campaigned for California's Proposition 187. The fund also supports an English-only advocacy group called U.S. English. Not surprisingly, the fund looks disparagingly on affirmative action and coercive integration. In general, much of its program coincides with the views of the most nativist and xenophobic elements of the conservative movement.

Thus it's no surprise to find that the Pioneer Fund has links to those right-wing political forces who made large gains in the mid-term elections. Thomas Ellis, who is a close confidant of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC), is a former Pioneer Fund director. The fund itself has made grants to a right-wing group called the Coalition for Freedom that has established a "Jesse Helms Institute for Foreign Policy and American Studies."

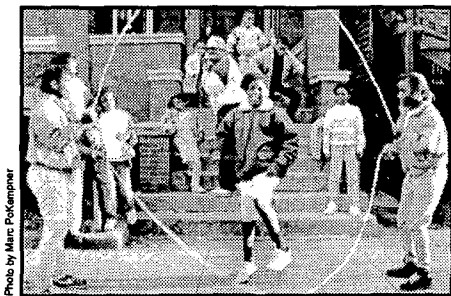
These are heady days for the Pioneer Fund. Many legislators who favor its political agenda are now ascendant in Congress, and the popular press has magnified the significance of its hereditarian arguments with the publicity surrounding *The Bell Curve*. For example, a review of the Murray-Herrnstein book in *The New York Times Book Review* also featured two other books with largely the same theme. One of them was Rushton's *Race, Evolution and Behavior*, the volume Alan Ryan has dismissed as "bizarre." Though the Pioneer Fund hasn't subsidized either Herrnstein or Murray, its director, Harry Weyher, has expressed strong support for their conclusions.

And *The Bell Curve* boils those conclusions down to this: those with the lowest intellectual levels are outbreeding the brightest population, and since intelligence is largely inherited, this country is losing the cognitive base essential for coping with national problems. Perhaps the most damaging aspect of the book's argument is the conclusion that remedial attempts to boost the intelligence of certain groups are fruitless. That argument can't help but be reassuring to an electorate demanding that the government be less concerned with the social safety nets that have aided many urban blacks in our resource-starved post-industrial cities. If, as *The Bell Curve* argues, social pathology is a function of genes, then the crisis in black America is imperious to social remediation.

But such arguments also set the stage for a vigorous resistance from those groups deemed genetically incapable. The confluence of *The Bell Curve* and the Republican revolution has provoked an increase in organizing activity in African-American communities around the country. And the rabid anti-immigration sentiment unleashed by the battle over California's Proposition 187 has triggered a groundswell of Latino protest.

The convergence of the agendas of the political right and the advocates of hereditarianism has created the potential for a coalition of opposition that may turn out to be the silver lining in this stormy era.

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ECONOMICS

Democracy's slow death

*A "de facto
world
government,"
led by
transnational
corporations,
is now taking
shape.*

By Noam Chomsky

Thomas Jefferson once warned of the dangers posed by a "single and splendid government of an aristocracy, founded on banking institutions and moneyed incorporations," through which the few would be "riding and ruling over the plundered ploughman and beggared yeomanry." Today, Jefferson's nightmare is being realized beyond anything he might have dreamed.

In the *Financial Times*, BBC economics correspondent James Morgan describes the "de facto world government" that is now taking shape: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, G-7, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and other structures designed to serve the interests of transnational corporations (TNCs), banks and investment firms in a "new imperial age." At the other

end of the bludgeon, the nongovernmental South Commission (consisting of leading Third World economists, government planners, religious leaders and others) observes that "the most powerful countries in the North have become a de facto board of management for the world economy, protecting their interests and imposing their will on the South," where governments "are then left to face the wrath, even the violence, of their own people, whose standards of living are being depressed for the sake of preserving the present patterns of operation of the world economy"—that is, the present structure of wealth and power.

A particularly valuable feature of the rising de facto government institutions is their immunity from popular influence, even awareness. They operate in secret, creating a world subordinated to the needs of investors, with the public "put in place," the threat of democracy reduced. This reversal of the expansion of democracy over the past centuries is a matter of no slight importance, alongside the new forms of perversion of

classical liberal doctrine in the international economy.

These developments are naturally regarded with much concern throughout the Southern Hemisphere, and the growing Third World at home should be no less concerned. In his last address to the Group of 77, which represents more than 100 of the less developed nations, Chairman Luis Fernando Jaramillo of Colombia contemplated the "hostile international environment" and the "loss of economic and political standing" of the developing nations "in the so-called New World Order ... at the dawn of the 21st century." These factors cause real adversity that contrasts sharply with the "euphoria" engendered by the agreement of international elites. The strategy of the rich, Jaramillo observed, is "clearly directed at strengthening more and more the economic institutions and agencies that operate outside the United Nations system," which, with all its serious flaws, remains "the only multilateral mechanism in which the developing countries can have some say."

In contrast, institutions such as the World Bank and IMF that are being made "the center of gravity for the principal economic decisions that affect the developing countries" are marked by "their undemocratic character, their lack of transparency, their dogmatic principles, their lack of pluralism in the debate of ideas and their impotence to influence the policies of the industrialized countries"—whose dominant sectors they serve, in reality.

The new World Trade Organization established by the latest GATT agreements will align itself with the World Bank and the IMF in "a New Institutional Trinity which would have as its specific function to control and dominate the economic relations that commit the developing world,"

according to Jaramillo, while the industrialized countries will make "their own deals ... outside normal channels," in G-7 meetings and elsewhere.

A similar perception was expressed at a conference organized by Jesuits in San Salvador in January 1994. Its report concludes that "Central America today is experiencing globalization as a more devastating pillage than what its people underwent 500 years ago with the conquest and colonialization," a comment that generalizes to much of the "developing world." The new dominant force is not the market but rather "a strong transnational state that dictates economic policy and plans resource allocation. The IMF, World Bank, International Development Bank, U.S. Agency for International Development, European Community, U.N. Development Program and their ilk are all state or interstate institutions of a transnational character that have much greater economic influence over our countries than the market."

Moreover, the institutions of the transnational state largely serve other masters, as state power typically does; in this case, the rising transnational corporations in the domains of finance and other services, manufacturing, media and communications—institutions that are totalitarian in internal structure, quite unaccountable, absolutist in character and immense in power. Within them, a participant takes a place in a fairly rigid hierarchy of domination, implementing orders from above, transmitting them downwards. Those outside may try to rent themselves to the masters and may purchase what they produce, but few other options are open to the great mass of the population.

One consequence of the globalization of the economy is the rise of new governing institutions to serve the interests of transnational economic power. Another is the spread of the two-tiered Third World social model to the industrial world. The United States is taking the lead, another consequence of the unusual power and class consciousness of the business sector, which has been able to resist the social contract that popular struggle has achieved elsewhere. Increasingly, production can be shifted to low-wage areas, and directed to privileged sectors in the global economy. Large parts of the population thus become superfluous for production and perhaps even as a market, unlike the days when Henry Ford realized that he could not sell cars unless his workers had a decent wage in a more national economy.

GATT, NAFTA and the like are called "free trade" agreements. That is a misdescription. Firstly, the term "trade" hardly applies to a system in which some 40 percent of U.S. "trade" is intrafirm, centrally managed by the same highly visible hands that control planning, production and investment. Over half of U.S. "exports" to Mexico, for example, do not enter the Mexican market, consisting of transfers from one to another branch of a U.S. corporation, to maximize gains from lower labor costs and environmental standards. Such internal operations (including pricing policies aimed at tax benefits and the like) also introduce various market distortions that amount to non-governmental non-tariff barriers of no small scale, though not consid-

ered in the trade agreements and the neoliberal fetishism that accompanies them.

Calculations of alleged trade efficiencies overlook numerous other factors. Former World Bank senior economist Herman Daly notes that they do not take into account such matters as the artificial reduction of transport costs by government subsidy of energy through investment tax credits and research, as well as military expenditures that ensure access to petroleum and control its price, which is a large part of the function of the Pentagon system.

Environmental costs of fuel-burning are also "externalized," another factor that would greatly reduce the alleged advantages of trade. In the case of U.S.-Mexico trade, Daly observes, "U.S. corn subsidized by depleting topsoil, aquifers, oil wells and the federal treasury can be freely imported" to Mexico, so that "it is likely that NAFTA will ruin Mexican peasants when 'inexpensive' U.S. agribusiness

exports, subsidized in such ways, undercut them and drive them to the cities, lowering wages there, and indirectly in the United States as well.

In an important critical analysis of GATT, Daly and fellow World Bank economist Robert Goodland point out that in prevailing economic theory, "firms are islands of central planning in a sea of market relationships." "As the islands get bigger," they note, "there is really no reason to claim victory for the market principle"—particularly as the islands approach the scale of the sea.

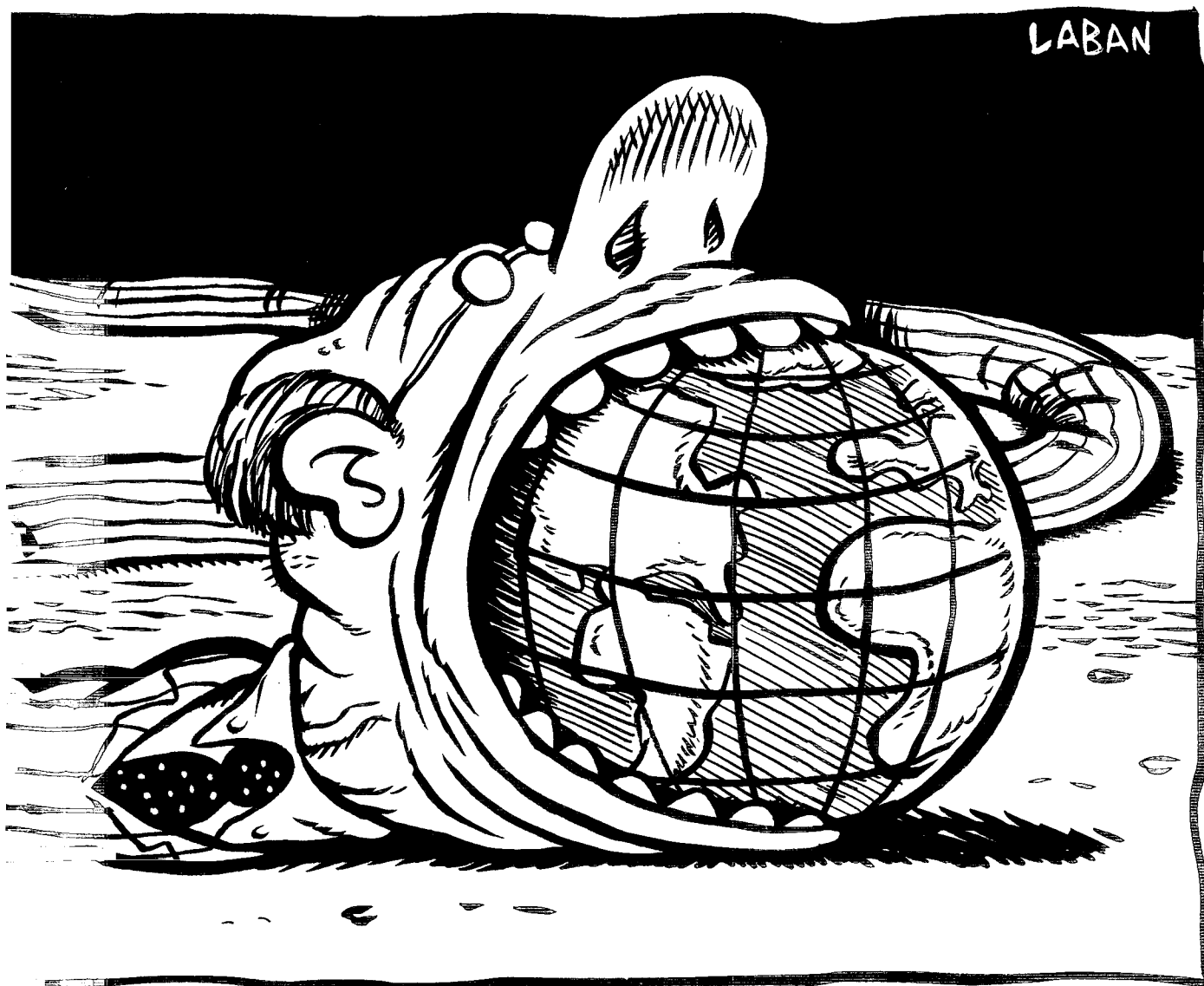
Apart from not being remotely "free," the "free trade" agreements are only partially related to "trade," not only



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because they enhance the power of TNCs and thus reduce "trade" (in any meaningful sense). The agreements go far beyond trade. One leading feature is the demand for liberalization of finance and services, which means allowing international banks to displace domestic rivals so that no country can carry out the kind of national economic planning

In other ways as well, the current trade agreements reflect the hostility of the "rich nations" to the neoliberal doctrines that are imposed on the poor to ensure more efficient plunder. One primary U.S. objective is increased protection for "intellectual property," including software and patents, with patent rights extending to process as well as product. The



that enabled the rich countries to develop. And, needless to say, Adam Smith's principle that "free circulation of labor" is one of the cornerstones of free trade, while constantly invoked by the Third World, is dismissed out of hand by the champions of neoliberalism, who also have little use for their hero's conclusion that working people will be devastated by market forces "unless government takes some pains to prevent" this outcome, as must be assured in "every improved and civilized society." Furthermore, the rich powers, and dominant elements within, remain opposed to free trade as they commonly have been, except when they feel they can prevail in competition.

U.S. International Trade Commission estimates that U.S. companies stand to gain \$61 billion a year from the Third World if U.S. protectionist demands are satisfied in GATT (as they are in NAFTA), a cost to the South that will dwarf the huge debt service flow when extrapolated to other industrial countries. Such doctrines—which the United States and other rich countries never accepted when they were developing—are designed to ensure that U.S.-based corporations control the technology of the future, including biotechnology, which, it is hoped, will allow state-subsidized private enterprise to control health and agriculture, and the means of life generally, locking the poor majority

into dependence on high-priced products of Western agribusiness, biotechnology, the pharmaceutical industry and so on.

Exactly as intended, market reforms have undermined the basis for functioning democracy, leaving people isolated, "each for oneself," if not yet "crushed" as in Eastern Europe and other places mired more deeply in Third World misery. One finds much the same in American working-class communities, where people who once struggled courageously and successfully for social justice and human rights are now often hopeless, demoralized and alone. Among the more deeply impoverished of America's growing Third World, criminal violence and other forms of social pathology have reached shocking proportions as human values erode under the impact of selective marketization.

Neither at home nor abroad does the real world resemble the dreamy fantasies now fashionable about history converging to an ideal of free markets and democracy, "a future for which America is both the gatekeeper and the model."

A more accurate description would bring together the features that have come more vividly into view over the past 20 years. In the New World Order, the world is to be run by the rich and for the rich. The world system is nothing like a classical market; the term "corporate mercantilism" is a closer fit. Governance is increasingly in the hands of huge private institutions and their representatives. The institutions are totalitarian in character: in a corporation, power flows from top down, with the outside public excluded. In the dictatorial system known as "free enterprise," power over investment decisions, production and commerce is centralized and sacrosanct, exempt from influence and control by workers and community as a matter of principle and law. Systems of private governance have gained undreamed-of power. They have naturally used it to create the "de facto world government" described in the business press, with its own institutions, also insulated from public inspection or influence. National governments, which in varying ways involve some measure of public participation, are constrained by such factors to serve the interests of the rich and powerful even more than in the past.

There is little that is new in neoliberal programs, trickle-down theories and the rest of the doctrinal baggage that serves the interests of privilege and power. The ideology of oppression may differ in form when applied to Third World service areas and domestic populations, but similarities are apparent, and current enthusiasms are hardly more than a recapitulation, often sordid, of earlier devices to justify the privilege of those who hold the reins. As in the early 19th century, we are now once more to understand that it is a violation of natural liberty and even science to deceive people into thinking that they have some rights beyond what they can gain by selling their labor power. Any effort to depart from such right thinking leads directly to the Gulag, leading thinkers soberly explain.

Amid an atmosphere of general dismay and fear, there are also signs of resistance, taking varied forms. Compare

two cases: the 1992 riots in South-Central Los Angeles and the Mayan uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, on January 1, 1994. In both cases, the uprising reflected the increasing marginalization of people who do not contribute to profit-making under prevailing institutional arrangements, and therefore lack human rights or value. People who live in the slums of Los Angeles once had jobs, in part in the state sector that plays a critical role in the "free market capitalist" society, in part in factories that have been shifted to places where labor can be more savagely exploited and destruction of the environment can proceed unhampered. By absolute measures, they are considerably wealthier than the Mayans of Chiapas, who recognize that what remains of their lives faces destruction as the investor rights agreements (NAFTA, GATT) extend their sway. But the Los Angeles riots proceeded quite differently from the Chiapas rebellion. The contrast reflects the difference between communities that have become demoralized and devastated by external forces and others that have retained their inner cohesion and vitality. The specific problems that lie ahead are quite different; the crying need for solidarity and constructive participation could hardly be more clear, in the face of the "global experiment" now under way.

The nature of the experiment is graphically illustrated by a report of the International Labor Organization (ILO), which estimates that about 30 percent of the world's labor force was unemployed in January 1994, unable to earn enough to sustain a minimum standard of living. This "long-term persistent unemployment" is a crisis on the scale of the Great Depression, the ILO concludes. Vast unemployment persists alongside of huge demands for labor. Wherever one looks, there is work to be done of great social and human value, and there are plenty of people eager to do that work. But the economic system cannot bring together needed work and the idle hands of suffering people. Its concept of "economic health" is geared to the demands of profit, not the needs of people. In brief, the economic system is a catastrophic failure. Of course, it is hailed as a grand success, as indeed it is for a narrow sector of privileged people, including those who declare its virtues and triumphs.

How far can this go? Will it really be possible to construct an international society on something like the Third World model, with islands of great privilege in a sea of misery—fairly large islands, in the richer countries—and with controls of a totalitarian nature within democratic forms that increasingly become a facade? Or will popular resistance, which must itself become internationalized to succeed, be able to dismantle these evolving structures of violence and domination, and carry forth the centuries-old process of expansion of freedom, justice and democracy that is now being aborted, even reversed? These are the large questions for the future. ◀

Noam Chomsky is the author of numerous books on international politics and economics. This essay was adapted from *World Orders Old and New*, published this month by Columbia University Press. Copyright © 1994 by Noam Chomsky. Reprinted by arrangement with the publisher and author.

EASTERN EUROPE

State of siege

*Isolated
internationally,
the Bosnian
Serbs are
struggling to
regain ground
in Yugoslavia's
civil war.*

By Paul Hockenos
SARAJEVO

In the early morning gray of a rubble-strewn alleyway, Hebib Filipovic hurries to fill his last plastic water jug. The 67-year-old pensioner hobbles up the dark stairway to his fifth-floor flat, where he switches on the shortwave newscast. At the reports of the latest government army advances, he cracks a wide grin and, still out of breath, pencils in the new front lines on the map on his kitchen wall.

For the sixth night running, artillery shells from the surrounding Serb-held hills pounded his neighborhood, the price for the army's successes on various fronts. But neither Hebib nor his few remaining neighbors begrudge the army its victories. "Our army is stronger than ever," he says. "This winter could be our worst yet, but at least our fate is finally in our own hands."

Even as Sarajevo nears

its thousandth day of siege, the city exudes a new air of confidence. For the first time in this two-and-a-half-year war, the military initiative is with the Bosnia-Herzegovina (BH) government forces, and the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) has been bloodied. The mostly Muslim government army and Bosnian Croat forces are allied once again. In stark contrast to a year ago, when the savage Croat-Muslim war was at full pitch and the BH government had knuckled under to international peace plans establishing a small Muslim state, Bosnians today are hopeful and defiant, convinced that the war has finally, definitively turned in their favor.

Morale in the BH army is high, even though most soldiers still fight in jeans and tennis shoes, says Hebib's neighbor, Zlatan, a long-haired philosophy student turned front-line soldier. Zlatan, on weekend leave for the first time in four months, says the Serbs have lost the will to fight. "We're fighting for our homes and our lives," he says. "The Serbs don't know what they're fighting for. Once the Serbs have pillaged a city, they have no

reason to keep it. Our soldiers used to live there."

As winter approaches, the BH army's top priority is the defense of Sarajevo and the besieged eastern enclaves, says Gen. Jovan Divjac, one of several ethnic Serbs in the army high command. But Divjac claims that smaller strategic targets can be "liberated" from the Bosnian Serbs throughout the winter. The BSA captured most of its territory in the first months of the war, he points out, before a real government army even existed. At the time, the Yugoslav army—which supported the Bosnian Serbs—still had bases throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Villages and cities fell easily to the BSA.

But today Divjac considers the BH army a much more formidable force. Even before President Clinton withdrew U.S. support for the arms embargo against the BH army earlier this month, Divjac admits that light arms from "a few small friends" had been coming through. Sources close to the army speculate that Iran, Pakistan and Turkey—and possibly the United States—have been covertly supplying a small but steady flow of arms.

The renewal of the Muslim-Croat alliance has been decisive in recapturing key points such as Kupres, a victory that led to the reopening of the main road to central Bosnia and the BH-held cities of Travnik, Zenica and Tuzla. But six months after their nearly year-long conflict, the relationship between the BH army and the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) is still uncertain. The HVO units, under their own command, fight only for "Croatian" cities in formerly Croat-populated regions. Nevertheless, the two armies are cooperating remarkably well.

The initial success of the Muslim-Croat offensive



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**Bosnian Serb soldiers on
a hill outside Sarajevo.**

late October. Dressed in full military uniform, and surrounded by somber-faced soldiers at his Pale headquarters outside Sarajevo, Karadzic called for a general mobilization of all men between the ages of 16 and 65. "We will destroy and annihilate the enemy," he thundered. But with only 600,000 people on Serb-held territory—in contrast to 2.3 million on government land—all able-bodied men have long been conscripted into the BSA. Most Serbs know that without the support of the Yugoslav army, the two-thirds of the country that the BSA occupies will be almost impossible to hold.

But that support may not be forthcoming. When in late summer Karadzic rejected the peace plan brokered by France, Britain, Germany, Russia and the United States—known as the Contact Group plan—the Serb rulers in Bel-

prompted Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic to appear on Serb television in

grade cut their ties with Pale. Serb President Slobodan Milosevic, who controls the Yugoslav army, considered the peace plan too good to pass up.

Despite rumors of a split in Pale, however, Karadzic's support remains solid within the army and the Bosnian Serb leadership. Contrary to some reports, United Nations sources concede that the economic sanctions against his "Srpska Republika"—nominally enforced by Serbia proper and Montenegro—are having little effect. What the outside world denies the Bosnian Serbs, they get from the United Nations (U.N.). Karadzic demands half of all U.N. humanitarian aid and 30 percent of the fuel that is shipped through Bosnian Serb lines to Sarajevo and the besieged BH enclaves. To justify what most people in Sarajevo call blackmail, Peter Kessler of the U.N. High Commission for Refugees notes that, "There are many innocent Serbs who are suffering too."

The new offensive has heightened the growing tensions between the U.N. and the BH government. Bosnians are

deeply resentful that the countries driving the U.N.'s policies refuse to single out the Bosnian Serbs as the aggressor in the ongoing war. "France, Britain and Russia openly pursue a pro-Serb policy," says Aida, a young Muslim lawyer, echoing an accusation heard from the street corner to the highest offices of the government. "They tell us that we can't defend ourselves. They say that if we fight back they'll order air strikes or leave," she says. "I say let them leave. We can fight our own war."

The attitude of the U.N. Protection Force, which has more than 40,000 troops in the former Yugoslavia, makes it difficult to refute Aida's charges. When BH troops attempted to reopen an aid route into Sarajevo, violating a demilitarized exclusion zone, France, Britain and Russia all threatened air strikes against the BH army. But when Serbs have shelled Sarajevo from the other side of the same zone, the Protection Force has refused to acknowledge the source of the artillery. At a recent press conference, the U.N. military commander in Bosnia, Lt. Gen. Michael Rose, said that if BH units continue to "provoke" the Bosnian Serbs within the exclusion zone around Sarajevo, thus endangering U.N. peace-keeping troops, the U.N. will pull out its ground forces.

With the latest peace plan and the nine-month-old cease-fire around Sarajevo effectively dead, the withdrawal of U.N. troops is becoming ever more likely. The Bosnian Serbs still refuse to sign the Contact Group peace plan, even though Rose and French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé

recently sweetened the pot further, explicitly offering the Serb side the option of federating with rump Yugoslavia. The BH government, which grudgingly went along with the plan, would not do so today. "It's clear to us now that the international community had no intention of exerting real pressure on Karadzic," says Ivo Komsic, a Croat and member of the BH leadership. "The international community betrayed us, but now we're applying the pressure ourselves."

As bitter as the Bosnians may be about their treatment, they remain almost dogmatically committed to a multiethnic, multinational state. In Sarajevo, Muslims, Croats and Serbs still live together. "Karadzic and his bandits aren't normal Serbs—they're Chetniks, fascist Serbs," says Snezjina, a 30-year-old Muslim schoolteacher. "My neighbors and friends are Serbs. They're still here with us."

The Bosnians have learned the nature of realpolitik the hard way. After the countless international "peace plans" that effectively divided up the country, the BH government had no choice but to defend its sovereignty by responding militarily to the Serbs. The next time it sits down at the negotiating table, the BH leadership intends to do so from a position of strength. Should the army continue to advance in the field, the Bosnians will not again consent so easily to partition their country to the Serbs' advantage. The war in Bosnia is far from over. In Sarajevo, they say that it's just begun.

Paul Hockenos is the author of *Free to Hate: The Rise of the Right in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Routledge).

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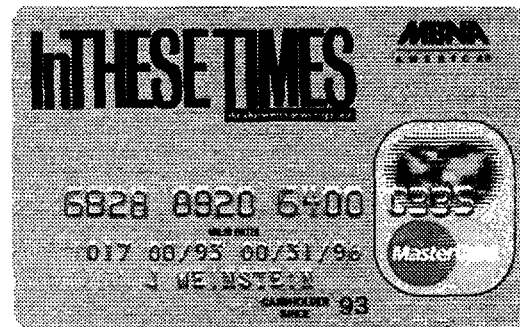
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I N T H E A R T S

Red-blooded American males

Like other recent monster movies, Interview with the Vampire plays on the average white guy's fears.

By Pat Dowell

Interview with the Vampire is a most unwholesome treat. And, arriving as it did only days after the Republican right sank its teeth into an all-too-willing body politic, it seems—at first glance, anyway—a gleefully subversive one.

Here, after all, is the Christian Coalition's worst nightmare—rampantly aroused young men sucking on one another, and playing at a fiendish parody of parenting when they take an orphaned little girl into their everlasting night. Why, there's even a scene in which the American vampire abroad visits a Parisian theater company staffed by bloodsuckers whose idea of performance art is several magnitudes more visceral than Karen Finley's NEA-funded pieces.

Director Neil Jordan, famous for another sensual repast, *The Crying Game*, has faithfully captured the

Anne Rice novel, as if that's a compliment. Rice brought the vampire genre back to life by driving a stake through the heart of its religious symbolism, which had posed Dracula as the inverted Christ anointed by an anti-sacrament of blood. Her books feast on the creature's rapacious sexuality, and her prose echoes the polite pornography of such underground classics as *The Story of O*. There's a whole lot of heaving going on in Rice's "Vampire Chronicles," with their emphasis on coercive pleasure and ecstatic pain.

What was notable about Rice's treatment of the vampire—and it's retained in the movie—is its unabashed homoeroticism. Even one of Oprah Winfrey's audience members caught on, when the talk-show host did a special on the movie, and told interviewee Tom Cruise that it was a gay movie. The ingenuous young man was shouted down by outraged women in the audience. He had violated the unspoken covenant that allows America's vast population of normopaths permission to sample unbridled displays of sexual desire under the imprimatur of famil-

iar and socially sanctioned categories—horror flicks, vampire stories, Tom Cruise movies, Major Movie Events.

Even so, audiences can be forgiven for not being able to make perfect sense of the film's sexual politics. *Interview with the Vampire* is perched somewhere between celebration of homoerotic fantasy and blood libel of the gay community. We are, remember, being treated to homoerotic heroes as bloodsucking demons with designs on everyone in the daylight world (and in one memorable encounter, on their poodles too).

Tom Cruise, after all the bad publicity from an initially disgruntled Rice, looks right at home cuddling up to Brad Pitt. Cruise gives one of his nimbler performances in what is, wisely, a supporting role, as the vampire Lestat (or as Pitt's Louis fetchingly refers to him, "the one who made me"). Pitt carries the movie soulfully as the sucker who seeks eternal release from his unsavory but thrilling lifestyle choice.

Louis has been an uneasy recruit, despite his initial willingness to sample forbidden pleasures. The movie emphasizes the recruiting aspects of the vampire's culture, and the



Interview with the Vampire
Directed by Neil Jordan

PHOTOS © GEFEN PICTURES/FRANCOIS DUHAMEL



of religion and state authority. That's why horror has always been written about as the "return of the repressed."

But this year, a banner year for movie monsters, has seen the resurgence of a different kind of repressed energy. The werewolf, the creature and now the undead have come leaping back to the screen in deluxe editions, embodied by the classiest of actors in the first two instances (Jack Nicholson in *Wolf*, Robert De Niro in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*) and by the hottest young box-office stars, in the case of *Interview*.

These classic monsters all rose to Hollywood prominence in pre-World War II America, in the Depression and its aftermath, and they bore the traces of class warfare in their disgust with the preying of the old

issue of choice in becoming one—a feature not much remarked upon in the old days, when the leading victims were women. Certainly the central female of *Interview*, a child named Claudia played by the preternaturally talented 12-year-old Kirsten Dunst, is given no choice—though she proves, like any femme fatale, to have her own ambitions as events develop.

She meets a horrible end, but not before an amusing Claudia-has-two-daddies interlude, in which Lestat and Louis provide her with the best piano teachers and seamstresses in old New Orleans, only to have her dispatch them in fits of temper or appetite. Stuff like this should make *Interview with the Vampire* a great fund-raiser for Pat Robertson or for the American Family Association; it's like a great red flag waved mockingly at the family-values bullies. It also tweaks the anti-violence folks, with waves of blood and close-ups of ripped flesh.

Interview with the Vampire is lavish to look upon, thanks to cinematographer Philippe Rousselot's muted magnificence, and is seriously scary when it's not being creepily prurient. Like all the great monster movies, it is a testament to the pulse of life, to the irrepressibility of the animal appetite of humankind, the flesh, the anarchic impulse of the material world confronted with the controls

exhausted aristocracy upon the innocent villager. Their return in the '90s finds them refashioned to fit the needs of gender warfare.

Jack Nicholson is almost tenderly coaxed into hypermasculinity during his gradual transformation into a wolf who can compete in the dog-eat-dog world of Manhattan publishing (see *In These Times*, July 11); Kenneth Branagh's monotonous Victor Frankenstein seems little more than a cranky workaholic whose fiancée is always nagging him about leaving the lab to come home for their nuptials. She gets her comeuppance when he tries to transform her into a patchwork 18th-century Stepford wife. He's a terrible stitcher and the results provide the movie's only chills.

At least *Wolf* suggests a woman might run with the wolves as well, and *Frankenstein* hints that the lords of creation might need some instruction in the womanly arts (especially birthing). But nothing illustrates the return of the repressed white male quite so vividly and perversely as *Interview with the Vampire*, the best of the lot, which nevertheless hijacks the genre for a narcissistic revision that relegates women to eternal childhood or the status of prey. All three are movies preoccupied with the comeback of white guys. Should we be surprised that the undead are also laying claim to Capitol Hill?

I N P R I N T

Literary spin control

By John K. Wilson

No author likes a bad review. Some write letters to the editor in aggrieved self-defense. Some harbor resentments for years, even decades: Joseph Heller writes gleefully in the 33rd anniversary edition of *Catch-22* about how his novel was dismissed in 1961 as "repetitious and monotonous" by a reviewer in the *New York Times Book Review*. The reviewer declared that Heller "wallows in his own laughter and finally drowns in it." Heller, who has had the last laugh, adds, "I am tempted now to drown in laughter as I set this down."

Most authors simply ignore a negative review, assuming that there's nothing to be done about it. Bad reviews are an inevitable part of a writer's life. Or are they? In recent months, efforts at literary spin control have become more and more blatant (and more and more effective) as writers and publishers have sought to suppress criticism of their books—withholding review copies from potential adversaries and launching smear campaigns against hostile critics.

One of the easiest ways to stop criticism during the crucial first weeks of a book's release is to keep ideological opponents from getting an advance copy. The *Wall Street Journal* reported October 20 that *The Bell Curve*, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's controversial book about IQ and heredity, was "swept forward by a strategy that provided book galleys to likely supporters while withholding them from likely critics." (See story on page 23.) As Harvard education professor Howard Gardner explained, "They wanted to prevent people like me from responding before they made a big ballyhoo." Murray himself has defended the bias in distributing review copies. "It wouldn't be unreasonable for authors to want to avoid having their book trashed before people have a chance to read it," he explained.

Of course, by refusing to allow critics advance copies of the 845-page book, Murray did not stop the torrent of criticism against the book. But he did make sure the criticism was largely uninformed. When *The New Republic* devoted

an entire issue to debating *The Bell Curve*, David Brooks in the *Wall Street Journal* condemned it as "an Orwellian ritual-denunciation session," complaining that "none of the commentators put up pretense of having read the book," perhaps because Murray wouldn't let them.

A careful refutation of the entire book will take time, and will not appear until long after the first wave of publicity has died down. In the meantime, Murray has been able to present himself as a careful social scientist who is not afraid to tell the disturbing truth.

In fact, it is writers and publicists, not reviewers, who have most successfully employed the tactic of "ritual denunciation." When Nina Auerbach wrote a critical review of Christina Hoff Sommers' *Who Stole Feminism?* in the June 12 *New York Times Book Review*, (see ITT, June 27) she found herself the target of a deluge of criticism. Sommers, whose book purported to indict feminism for its ideological intolerance, launched a phone campaign attacking Auerbach and questioning her fitness as a reviewer. Sommers charged that Auerbach had "recognized" herself as someone criticized in the book and had written the negative review to "settle scores." (The passage in question described an unnamed University of Pennsylvania English professor who had written marginal comments on a paper by Sommers' stepson; Auerbach, a University of Pennsylvania English professor, says she has no memory of Sommers' stepson or of the alleged comments.)

The condemnation of Auerbach was equally severe in the media. Rush Limbaugh told his listeners that "militant gender feminazi feminism" and the *New York Times* were trying "to kill this book" by "reacting hysterically." Hilton Kramer in the *New York Post* called it a "deliberate attempt to annihilate an important new book on feminist politics." Jim Sleeper in the *New York Daily News* openly accused Auerbach of lying when she claimed not to recognize herself. Howard Kurtz in the *Washington Post* made a similar charge, in less extreme terms, with a headline that asked "A review or revenge?"

Ironically, Auerbach was selected to review *Who Stole Feminism?* because the *Times Book Review* editor, Rebecca Sinkler, knew she was "a critic of academic feminism in its sillier manifestations." And Auerbach observes, "because I thought *Who Stole Feminism?* might be an authentic articulation of my own doubts about some feminist pieties rather than the right wing-instigated attack missile it is, I agreed to review it." Auerbach notes: "Ironically, if any informed reviewer were to like this book, I would have been that reviewer. But I am close enough to her academic material to know how skewed her accusations are and the worth of what she is trying to destroy." The inaccurate charge that Auerbach was "named" in Sommers' book (and therefore disqualified from reviewing it) was especially strange because many of Sommers' supporters who are named in the book reviewed it, including Jean Bethke Elshtain in *The New Republic*, Mary Lefkowitz in the *National Review* and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese in the *Atlanta Journal and Consti-*

tion—all of whom are praised in *Who Stole Feminism?* as “distinguished figures.”

The criticism of Auerbach's review has had a powerful effect. Auerbach had written 15 previous reviews for the *New York Times*, many of them highly critical, without any reaction from the authors. Now she says, Sommers' book “probably ... will be the last one on feminism I'll review.”

Worst of all, the campaign against Nina Auerbach and the *New York Times* sidetracked much of the debate about Sommers' book. After the backlash against the *Times* Book Review, other editors were probably reluctant to give *Who Stole Feminism?* to likely critics lest they spark similar protests. And by dismissing critics of the book as doctrinaire feminists with a grudge, Sommers and her supporters avoided the serious challenges to the distortions and errors in *Who Stole Fem-*

nism? A debate about the facts was transformed into a debate about Auerbach's right to review the book.

Unfortunately, the reluctance of authors to engage in real debate is becoming increasingly taken for granted. As editor of *Democratic Culture* (a publication of Teachers for a Democratic Culture), I put together a special issue with 15 responses to *Who Stole Feminism?* and invited Sommers to reply to some of the essays. She refused after learning that the writers would be allowed to respond to what she wrote, then denounced the issue as “a smear campaign of the highest order.”

The efforts to limit open debate aren't limited to the right. *Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas*, a new book by Jill Abramson and Jane Mayer about the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill controversy, was withheld from reviewers in order to allow the *Wall Street Journal* and ABC “exclusives” to the book. Both, unsurprisingly, gave the book uncritical treatment. According to the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* demanded that no other publication be permitted access to the book before their November 2 publication of excerpts from it. (Ironically, this almost cost the book its nomination for a National Book Award, since it was not considered until one of the judges asked to see it, and a special confidentiality agreement had to be arranged with the judges.)

ABC had the TV media's monopoly of the book's story and showed what amounted to an hour-long infomercial for the book on the November 2 *Turning Point*, followed by author interviews on *Nightline* and *Good Morning America*. No one could seriously argue that ABC's presentation represented a balanced or objective perspective on the Hill/Thomas controversy. Sen. John Danforth's appearance with Mayer on *Nightline* was the sole example of anyone questioning the evidence, and even Danforth focused mainly on the “inappropriateness” of revisiting the issue. An excerpt of Danforth's book *Resurrection* on the Thomas hearings was the only contrary opinion in the *Wall Street Journal* as well.

Certainly, the revelations in *Strange Justice* were newsworthy and deserved to be heard, and there's no reason why ABC must be completely “objective” in their news coverage. The problem comes from the monopoly ABC was given to cover the story, which gave them the same incentive as Abramson and Mayer to push the book as an “untold story” with dramatic revelations and to ignore critics who would challenge this evidence.

The use of selective distribution to reviewers, media embargoes and exclusive arrangements may be ethi-

cally dubious, but it's obviously effective at selling books: Houghton Mifflin raised the print run for *Strange Justice* from 75,000 to 115,000 in anticipation of the media blitz.

Book reviewing has become a politicized occupation, where the ideal of the objective, neutral reader is no longer possible. That's not necessarily a bad thing: the greatest threat to book reviewing comes from routine, dull reviews that neither attack nor defend but simply summarize the plot and give the book a thumbs up or a thumbs down. But until there is a consensus to condemn the efforts to control how books are depicted in the media, the attempts to silence opposition will only increase.

Perhaps the best answer is to give up the guise of objective reviewing altogether. Confrontational, well-researched reviews do far more to extend intellectual debate than dutiful summaries, but few editors seem willing to risk the wrath of irate readers and the publishers who advertise in their pages. Until the fear of controversy is overcome, writers and publishers will continue to insulate themselves from criticism, to the detriment of readers interested in hearing the truth that emerges from the conflict of ideas. ◀

John K. Wilson is the editor of *Democratic Culture* and the author of *The Myth of Political Correctness* (forthcoming from Duke University Press).



Fear of feminism

By Leora Tanenbaum

An angry fist pounds a stack of textbooks on the cover of *Professing Feminism*, a book that promises a devastating critique of the discipline of women's studies. It's not clear if the fist is supposed to belong to the authors or to those crazy militant feminists within the academy. No matter: authors Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge are guilty of the very characteristics they ascribe to women's studies—ideological rigidity, sloppy scholarship. It comes as no surprise that they teach in women's studies programs themselves—Patai at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Koertge at Indiana University.

Today, a quarter of a century after the emergence of the discipline in the turbulence of the late '60s and early '70s, there are 600 undergraduate and several dozen graduate women's studies programs at colleges and universities across the country. Women's studies programs are multidisciplinary, meaning that individual courses from various traditional departments such as English, history, and biology count toward the major along with specialized seminars.

What makes women's studies different from other multidisciplinary majors is its commitment to feminist politics. "From the outset, women's studies occupied an unusual position in academe," Patai and Koertge write. "It was not just multidisciplinary but had a dual agenda: educational (the study first of women and then of gender) and political (the correction of social injustice)." Both the scholarly and political goals are endorsed and promoted by the National Women's Studies Association.

The authors, however, have a different agenda. They think women's studies should have only one real purpose: to "make women's lives a primary focus of inquiry" by finding and publicizing "information about the lives and words of women who had been forgotten and overlooked." Women's studies, they argue, should be nothing more than the rigorous academic study of women. In other words, no feminism allowed.

Patai and Koertge express a litany of complaints that most newsmagazine and book review readers can recite by

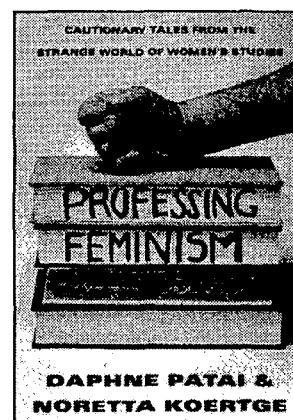
heart, thanks to the well-publicized arguments of critics ranging from Dinesh D'Souza and Camille Paglia to Katie Roiphe and Christina Hoff Sommers: women's studies programs promote an ideologically rigid form of feminism that is dangerously single-minded; the programs exclude men from courses and foster an anti-male spirit; students are cheated out of a solid education because politics, rather than scholarship, predominates; and there is a touchy-feely insistence on self-disclosure that leads to the ideological policing of students' attitudes about gender, race and class.

To gather evidence that these traits are characteristic of the discipline, the authors interviewed 30 women, both students and faculty, from women's studies programs around the country. The bulk of the book is composed of excerpts of verbatim transcripts. Claiming that none of their informants would talk without the promise of anonymity, the authors reveal no names of individuals or schools.

Few have much good to say about the programs. One professor was so dissatisfied with women's studies that she resigned from her program, choosing instead to work in a more traditional department. She told the authors that teaching a senior seminar was "a ghastly experience, one of the worst I've ever had in my life. I was doing a topic on mothers and daughters, which is probably like a red flag to a bull in a bullring. And there was a group of really tough students—they called themselves 'dykes,' actually—who, in the first class meeting, just launched an all-out assault on me for having men on my reading list. ... One group sat in the back and actually stomped their feet and kind of hooted sometimes when they heard things they didn't like." The image of obnoxious students stomping and hooting is one that Patai and Koertge relish as proof that those who engage in women's studies are so committed to a feminist "party line" that they refuse to confront opinions different from their own.

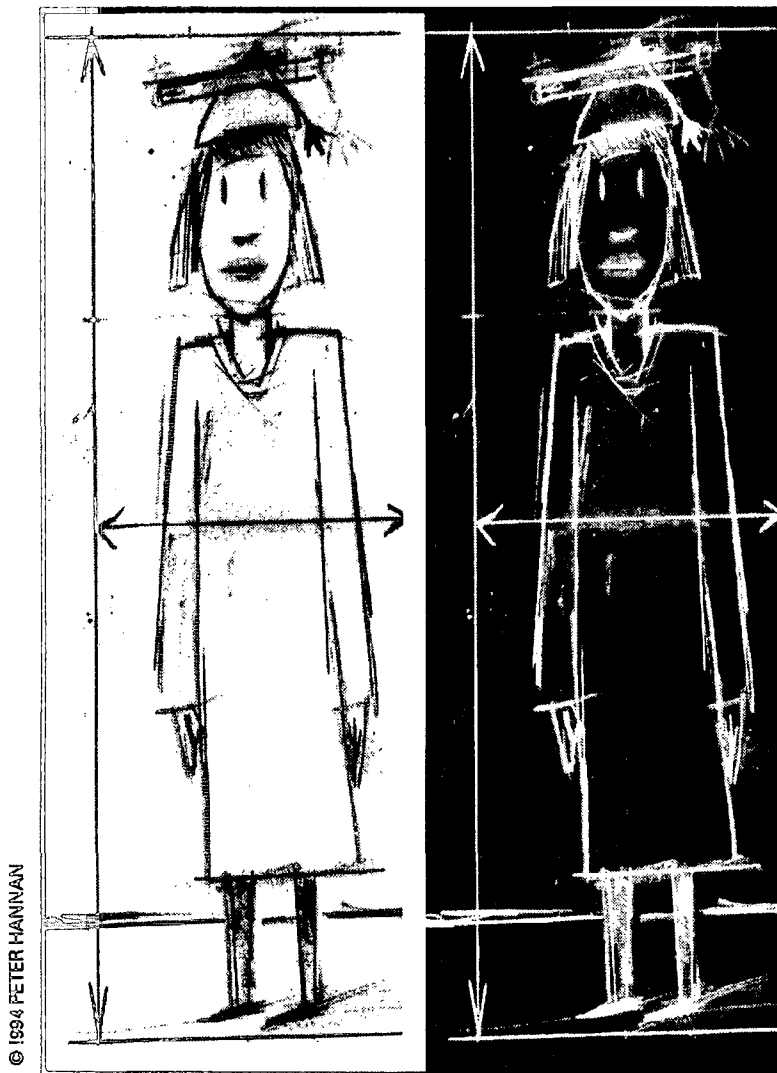
Speculating about the kinds of students who are attracted to women's studies, one professor commented, "The tendency—which I've always thought of as, in psychoanalytic terms, a borderline personality disorder—to always take an either/or, an us/them, an all-good/all-bad approach, this tendency very much characterizes women's studies."

This dualistic way of thinking, the authors assert, is characteristic of identity politics (or IDPOL, as the authors clumsily label it in an attempt to mock the linguistic puns of



Professing Feminism: Cautionary Tales From The Strange World of Women's Studies

By Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge
Basic Books/A New Republic Book
235 pp., \$24



some European feminists), an ideological tendency that leads to the creation of a hierarchy of oppressions. Of course, everyone wants to lead the list—lesbians, blacks, Jews, you name it. “We have a women’s movement made up of all these little tiny groups, because each wants special attention,” a recent college graduate complained in her interview. “There’s no solidarity, because we’re all so interested in making sure the world knows that people are diverse. We don’t come together often enough anymore.”

Laments like this pepper every page. Patai and Koertge assure us that they are honestly revealing the authentic opinions of typical people involved in women’s studies, but I doubt they’re telling us everything they heard. The opinions are much too uniform to be undoctored. At one point, the authors comment that “[t]he students we talked to had strong reactions—some positive, some negative—to their experiences in feminist classrooms.” Yet we are privy only to transcripts from women who had formed bad impressions. The one time the authors do quote from a satisfied customer, the purpose is to mock her feminist idealism.

Many of the authors’ examples of feminist extremism are

rather strained. As evidence of feminist fragmentation into ever-smaller interest groups, the authors mockingly quote one writer who describes herself (without irony) as “a lesbian socialist-feminist mother of a 12-year-old interracial daughter...” The source of this damning identification? An obscure, decade-old book on mothering put out by a tiny publisher in Totowa, N.J.

The authors are similarly indignant about one women’s studies professor who requires her advisees to join a study group. “Is this professor merely helping her students learn how to network?” they complain. “Or is she telling them that it is not possible to work alone, and that one can do nothing without supportive friends?” It’s an unexpected comment from two authors who are collaborating to write a book.

The big picture is far more complicated than the authors acknowledge. It is not difficult to find examples of intolerance within the discipline, as I did when I asked around among some recent graduates: woman professors who regard the men in their classes with suspicion and hostility; students competing for bragging rights to the title of most oppressed. But there are counterexamples as well: a professor teaching the volatile topic of sexual politics who tells her students that if the reading jars emotionally, they should discuss their feelings with a counselor rather than with the class; professors so eager to make male students comfortable in their classes that they are unable to prevent them from talking so much they dominate the discussion.

In their rush to document each and every sign of trouble within the discipline, Patai and Koertge miss the most critical point of all: that such intolerance is often a reaction to a hostile atmosphere. An acquaintance of mine, who graduated from Columbia in 1991 and took several women’s studies courses at Barnard, notes that it is the women’s studies program at Columbia, not all-female Barnard, that most resembles Patai and Koertge’s portrait. “When you’re at Barnard, everything revolves around women all the time,” she told me. “Every department dealt with women’s issues, so the women’s co-op had a diverse group that welcomed different types of women. Whereas at Columbia, feminist issues weren’t part of the picture at all. The women’s center was the only haven for feminism and I think the feminists there felt that they should be vocal and they tended to define feminism for everybody else.” In a place where you’re marginalized, in other words, you feel beleaguered—and unfortunately, as a result, may be less likely to tolerate differences of opinion.

Yet Patai and Koertge don’t stop to consider the sexism pervasive in academia. If they sincerely cared about rehabilitating women’s studies rather than scoring a few debating points, they would have examined the wider political context within which the discipline has emerged—and the debates that have already taken place.

Feminists are hardly incapable of self-criticism; some,

like critic Ellen Willis, have been unravelling the complicated causes of feminist intolerance since the second wave of feminism began. In a recent issue of the journal *Salmagundi*, Willis suggested that the current tendency of some young feminists to harbor resentment toward all things male and sexual is in many ways a reaction to a larger failure of feminism. "[T]here is at present no socially legitimate public language in which women, particularly young women, can directly and explicitly express anger at ... the sexism of everyday life—that is, men's ubiquitous, culturally sanctioned, 'normal' expression of dominance," Willis wrote. "Yet women have been deeply influenced by feminism; they desperately want men to 'get it'; and they are angry and frustrated. Where are these feelings to go? One crucial place they've migrated is campaigns against date rape and sexual harassment, which is to say that these issues have become relatively acceptable metaphors for a larger, and largely inexpressible, set of feminist concerns." It's difficult, in this context, for women to articulate their anger and frustration without sounding like they're making too much out of it.

But Patai and Koertge are dismissive of such realities. They simply want professors to teach about famous women in history and give a tough exam at the end of the semester. Who cares if the guys dominate in the classroom? Or, more to the point, in the world at large.

Leora Tanenbaum writes regularly on gender for *In These Times*.

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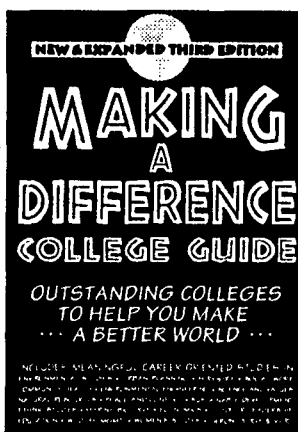
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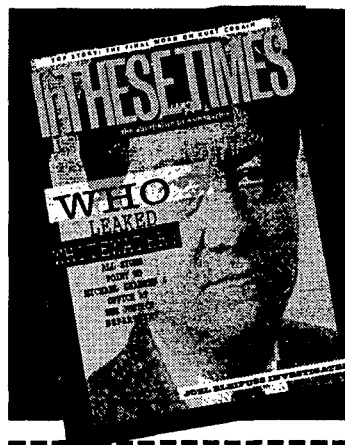
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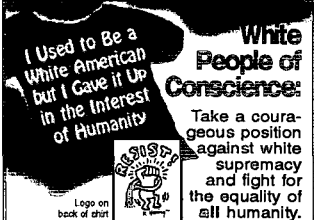
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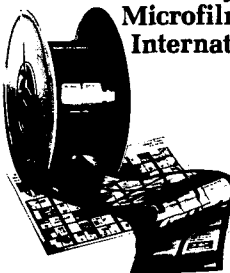
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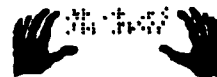
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Continued from page 42

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According to the best evidence I can gather, it will be at least a decade until our daughter can even minimally take care of herself, and probably two decades before she will be truly independent.

We love our daughter, but my wife and I have other things to do. We simply can't afford to wait until the year 2014 for her to become a fully functioning member of our household economy.

And why should society wait 10 or 20 years for people who are getting government handouts to "get their act together"? The more I reflect on our experience at home, the more I realize that cutting back on cash grants and private giving is just the first step in a total plan to eliminate poverty.

The next logical move is to zero out the social service agencies that provide free food, shelter and other necessities. If we really want to whip the dread culture of dependency, then we must eliminate all relationships that foster it. And who is more dependent than a

person who receives free food and shelter without doing any meaningful work in exchange?

Human nature being what it is, nobody will work to get food and shelter if they can just show up someplace and get it for free. And why should some people get something for nothing when the rest of us have to work for it?

Government leaders in Washington, in our state capitals, and in my hometown of Evanston are headed in the right direction. But as urban society crumbles around us, this is no time for half measures. If we're really determined to attack the problem, let's go all the way: No government grants. No guilt-driven individual giving. No free lunch. Or breakfast. Or dinner. That will lead us—finally—to a solution that will eliminate the *real* cause of poverty: the poor. ◀

Roger Kerson is a writer from Evanston, Ill. A version of this story first appeared in the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

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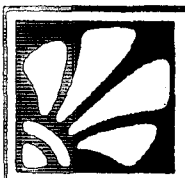
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I N T H E E N D

Finally, a solution to
the problem of

P O V E R T Y

By Roger Kerson

You might not know this, but poor people have too much money.

Don't worry. Government officials are hard at work attacking this problem by taking away disposable income from people at the bottom of America's economic ladder.

President Clinton's welfare reform package, for example, has proposed cutting off welfare payments to mothers with dependent children after just two years. The new Republican Congress is likely to recommend even harsher restrictions.

As usual, the nation's capital is just catching up to what's been happening in the provinces. During the past few years, state legislatures across the country have cut back or eliminated cash grants to "able-bodied" adults.

And in Evanston, the affluent Chicago suburb where I live, the city recently hired a squad of street workers to discourage people from giving spare change to panhandlers.

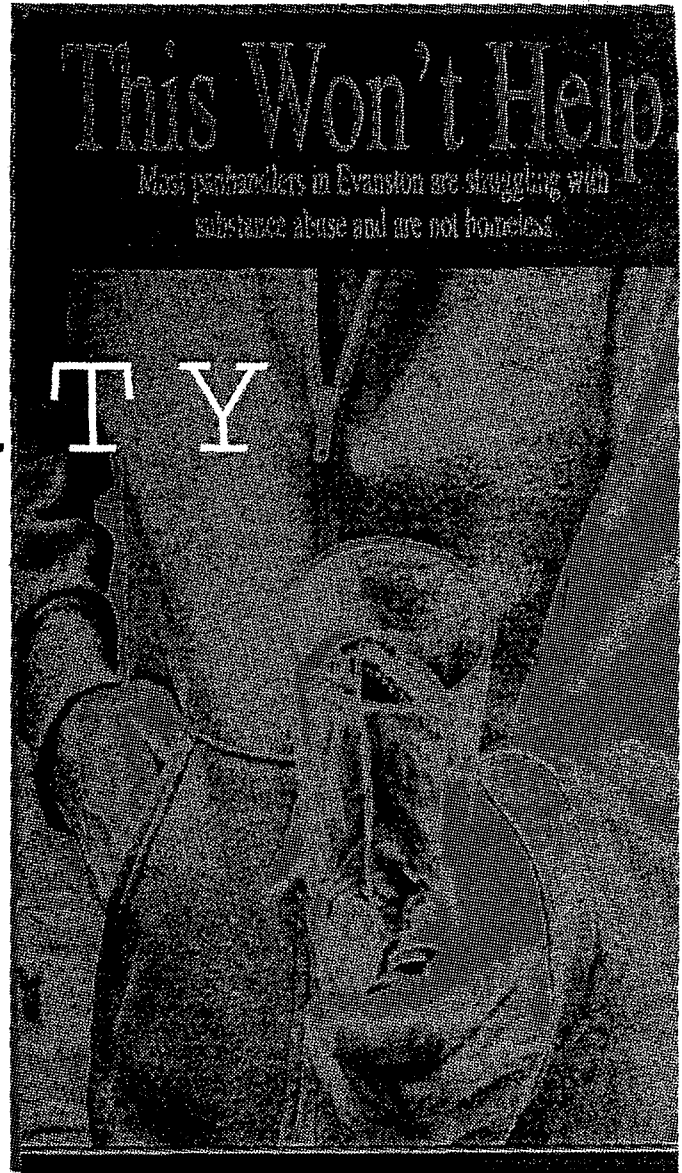
I'm not making this up. Evanston's crusade against generosity is backed by posters in local businesses, which show a picture of a panhandler's cup, underneath a bold headline: "This won't help."

It is bold indeed to assert that people who don't have money are not helped when you give them some. But decades of dissatisfaction with the modern welfare state have produced a dynamic new understanding of the lethal interaction between charity and poverty.

The theory, as I understand it, goes something like this: People are jobless, and therefore poor, because they are lazy, crazy, stoned or otherwise socially deficient.

To transform themselves from deficient wastrels into efficient workers, poor people need motivation. (Never mind job training or marketable skills. If you're motivated, you can move mountains!) No one will ever get motivated so long as they are trapped in a "culture of dependency," with easy handouts available. So: cut the welfare budget—and keep your spare change in your pocket.

I decided to give this motivational theory a try in my own



home earlier this year, when I became a father. As we began the task of child-rearing, I tried to persuade my wife to read books by George Gilder, Charles Murray and other thinkers who have developed the "culture of dependency" concept. Never too early, I figured, to develop a work ethic in our child.

My wife, however, operates under the influence of discredited liberal doctors such as Benjamin Spock and T. Berry Brazelton, who advocate feeding a child whenever and wherever it wishes to be fed—even if the child does nothing in return.

In the best tradition of well-meaning charity workers, my wife gives not just from her pocketbook, but of herself. She has poured her own bodily fluids into our baby, at all hours of the day or night, without regard to her own well-being.

After eight months of this forced collectivization of our family resources, I can report that the experiment is a total failure. Our daughter shows no signs of becoming responsible or self-sufficient. In fact, her demands continue to esca-

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